

I don't own Harry Potter or any of its characters.

Hello everybody and welcome to the first chapter of my Harry Potter story. I hope that everyone enjoys it as much as my Naruto story so please let me know how you feel about it.

Harry Potter stories were the first stories that I read on and I have read tons of them. From the moment I started reading Harry Potter fanfiction I was hooked and couldn't stop reading. Just like with Naruto fanfiction I have read some amazing stories and some less amazing but every story was worth the time to check out. Now however I decided to write my own story to contribute to the community so I hope I did a good job on it.

I would like to say that every idea in this story is my own but that would be lying. Like I said I have read to many stories and there are bound to be idea's and things that already have been done. Therefore I would like to say that any resemblance to another story is purely coincidence. If someone thinks that I stole their idea's than please PM me and I will give you credit for it if your claim is true. I wouldn't want to anger my fellow writers who inspired me so much.

Okay, enough talking let's get to the chapter. Enjoy.

Chapter 1: The letter from the future

Nine year old Harry Potter was mad, no scratch that he was furious. It was his birthday today and like every year for so far as he could remember none of his relatives made any notion of remembering his birthday. Briefly he wondered why he considered them relatives because they sure didn't treat him like one. They made him do the cleaning, cooking and he always had to do lots of chores while Dudley never had to do anything around the house.

The thought of Dudley doing chores make Harry smile a little. There was no way that Dudley would do chores, he would throw a tantrum, yell, scream and if that didn't work he would use the fake tears he was able to use so easily. Aunt Petunia was unable to resist her little Dudley when he cried and Dudley knew it all too well so when things didn't go his way he wailed and wailed until his parents indulged him. Two weeks ago it had been Dudley's birthday and he got a mountain

of presents but Dudley wasn't happy with it because he didn't get the Playstation he so badly wanted. When he asked his dad why he didn't get one Vernon replied that he already got 20 presents so the Playstation would be too expensive to buy as well. Hearing that Dudley turned on the tears and started crying while yelling that he didn't get the present he really wanted. After 10 minutes of playing pure brilliant comedy both his parent promised that they would go out and buy the Playstation and up to 5 games he wanted. After that Dudley calmed down and asked for breakfast.

Harry however never got any presents from his aunt and uncle, they didn't even wish him a good birthday. They just ignored him and give him the chores he had to do that day. So we find young Harry inside his cupboard (which was his room by the way) thinking about how unfair life was. He really didn't like being with his relatives but since he was an orphan he didn't have any choice in the matter. He would have to wait until he was of age before he could leave this house and life behind him. Besides his uncle had already warned him that the day he turned eighteen was the day he moved out of the house, Harry was fine with that the sooner the better he thought.

Harry laid on his cot just looking at the ceiling of his so called bedroom when something landed straight on his face. Surprised Harry jumped up and banged his head against the shelf just above him. Cursing and rubbing his head he looked at what had fallen on his head. It seemed to be a very thick envelope made out of really weird material. He picked it up and examined it from close by. When he turned the envelope over he saw a strange looking picture and the words 'Put some blood on me' with an arrow pointing towards the picture. Strangely Harry felt that he needed to do just that, he couldn't explain it but he sort of knew that this was a very important letter. He knew somehow that this letter would change his entire life, hopefully it would change it for the better but he would soon find out. Cutting his finger on a sharp metal point that he found on the underside of his bed he quickly wiped some blood on the picture. As soon as he did that the letter seemed to glow a brilliant white and caused him to drop the letter to put his hand in front of his eyes. When the light was gone he almost yelled but managed not to since that would alert his relatives. In front of him stood a young man dressed in funny clothes and he looked at Harry with concern and love.

"Hello Harry, Happy Birthday. If I'm right then you are now nine years old." The man said. Harry nodded since he couldn't talk since he was so shocked at what had happened.

"I imagine that you have a lot of questions but unfortunately I can't answer them. Not because I don't want to but because I can't hear you. This is just a hologram sealed into this letter but that's not important. Listen very well Harry, this is extremely important. My name is Harry Potter, that's right I'm you but from the future. Now I know this may sound unbelievable but it's true, Harry you are a very special person. You are a wizard Harry, trust me when I say that magic does exist but it's hidden from normal people like our relatives." Here the man snorted at the word relatives.

Nine year old Harry couldn't believe what he just heard. His future self had send a letter to him. Not only that he also told him that he was a wizard and that magic existed. This had to be some kind of joke or something but deep inside he felt that it was true.

"I know it seems unbelievable but it's true. Now I need you to promise me that won't repeat to anyone whatever I tell you. This is important Harry, promise me." The man said seriously. Young Harry just nodded showing he promised not to tell anyone.

"Good, first I will tell you something you always wanted to know. Your mom's name was Lily Potter, your dad's name was James Potter and they both loved you very much. Never doubt that Harry, one day you will understand why I know this but not yet." Harry from the future said. Nine year old Harry just stood there with tears running down his cheeks, he had always wondered who his parents were and if they loved him. Now he had the answer he had been looking for.

"The reason why I send this letter is that in the future you'll become a very strong wizard and you will have to fight a very strong Dark Lord. That's someone who uses his magic to do terrible things to people. The reason you will fight him is because it is your destiny to fight him and to defeat him as well. You won't be alone Harry, you will have wonderful friends who will help you fight every step of the way. Unfortunately while I managed to defeat the Dark Lord it cost me

almost every friend I had, one by one they got killed by our enemies. But the most painful loss was the death of the only woman we ever loved, our wife. That's right Harry, you will have a wonderful wife who's smart, kind, beautiful and above all who loved us more than anyone in the whole world. You will meet her soon enough I promise." Future Harry said sadly.

To young Harry this seemed so amazing, he would become a strong wizard who will have to fight a very bad man. He would have many friends but they would be killed by this Dark Lord and even have a wonderful wife. Now that was something Harry only could dream about, he always wanted to have family and friends but most of all he wanted someone who he could love and who loved him above everybody else. Harry made a promise that he wouldn't let his friends and his future wife get hurt by this mad Dark Lord.

"If I know you as well I do, then you already decided to protect them from harm. Good, that's exactly why I send this letter. I can't tell you what is going to happen or who your wife and friends will be but what I can tell you is that you will have to study hard and train hard to become as strong as possible. In two years you will get a letter from a magical school where you will learn to do magic. This will be a wonderful place Harry, I want you to have fun and enjoy yourself. Make friends, pull pranks and stuff like that but also study hard and do your best in class. There will be times where things go bad and for that I'm sorry but sometimes you have to let things happen. Never forget that you have friends and that you're not alone. I have include a small box inside the letter all you have to do is put some blood on it and it will grow. Inside are some instructions and things you have to learn before your eleventh birthday. Stay strong Harry and have faith in yourself. Good luck." Future Harry said before disappearing.

Harry just stood there watching the empty space where his future self used to be. It all seemed so unbelievable but yet at the same time he knew that everything that just happened was the absolute truth. No matter how farfetched and weird it may be. He started to grin already thinking about how he would learn about magic, maybe he could use magic to get a little payback at his relatives. But then he remembered how his future self explained that a Dark Lord was a person who used his magic on people to do bad things. At once the thoughts of getting

even with his relatives by using magic disappeared from his mind. No way would he do something like that, he didn't want to become a Dark Lord after all. He then went to pick up the letter and looked for the box. He found a really small box the size of a matchbox and quickly put some blood on it after he cut his finger again. The box started growing until it became the size of a big shoebox.

'Wow magic is great! I can't wait to learn how to do that.' Harry said in his mind. He opened the box and saw a letter with 'Read me first' written on it. He took the letter and sat on his bed so he could read it.

Hello Harry,

Bet you opened the box straight away? We always were curious weren't we?

Alright enough with the chatting and let's get to business shall we? Inside the box you will find several things and the instructions how to use them as well. These things will help you to become strong so please use them.

First item is a large amount of money, you will have to invest this money into several companies which are listed below. All you have to do is go to the bank and tell someone that you want to invest some money, they will take care of the rest. Off course, they would wonder how a nine year old got so much money so that's why I supplied you with a very useful little gadget. Inside you'll find a necklace that if you put it on will make them believe you're a thirty year old man. I included the necessary papers for you. The necklace will also insure that people don't ask too many questions or be suspicious about you. Please do not use the necklace too often or for other purposes. We don't want you getting too much attention after all. After you invest the money (don't worry, I made sure they're very good companies who will give you lots of money) you can later on use it to help you in the fight with the Dark Lord. You may wonder where money will help you but trust me when I say that money opens doors and possibilities that you will need. You can also have some money to spend as you please. Buy something you want just don't let our relatives see it.

When you did that, start reading some books on martial arts and fighting, they will help you get stronger. You don't have to become the best of the best just study them. I liked them very much when I started learning them. I would advice books on Aikido and Taekwondo since I learned those as well. The next thing you'll find are instructions to learn something called Occlumency. This will help you protect your mind because some people are able to read get inside your head and look at your secrets and memories. With these instructions you'll be able to master Occlumency before you get your letter to Hogwarts.

I know that you wanted to learn some magic already but that's impossible. Since you live amongst Muggles (people that can't use magic) its forbidden to do magic. Every witch or wizard that's underage (younger than 17) is forbidden to do magic as well except at Hogwarts. No worries about learning magic Harry when you get your letter from Hogwarts someone will pick you up and take you to a wizard town where you can buy all the stuff you'll need. When you get there look for books on battle magic, spells and curses they will come in handy later on. The last thing you'll will find is a book called 'Hogwarts, a history'. This is a book about the school and if you read it you'll have an idea how it looks like, read it Harry you'll like it I promise.

Well, the only thing left is to wish you good luck. I'm confident that you will make a very big difference and that the future will be much better thanks to you. Remember that you're not alone and protect those you love.

Ps. This letter will self-destruct after you have read it.

After reading the last line the letter just went up in flames causing Harry to let out a small yell from shock. 'Stupid future me, could have warned me.' Harry thought. He then looked inside the box and saw several packets of money neatly tied together. With trembling hands he grabbed a packet of money and saw that each packet was worth 5000 pounds. After shaking his head he started counting how many packets there were so he would get the total amount of money. He counted 10 packets in total making it to a total of 50 000 pounds. Harry couldn't believe what he was seeing, that was more money

than that most people make in several years of working. On each packet he saw a name of the company he had to invest it in, some company had 2 or 3 packets while some had only one. He figured that he would go to the bank in the morning. He still decided to keep 1000 pound hidden in his cupboard in case he needed something like books and stuff.

He also found the necklace his future self had talked about, it seemed pretty ordinary to him but if it worked that was fine for him. After that he looked through the notes on the Occlumency but seeing as it was already late he would have to start on it tomorrow. He quickly hid the box under his bed knowing that none of his relatives ever came in here so it would be safe. After that he took off his glasses and went to sleep. The evening had been very tiring and he was getting very sleepy. Not two minutes after he went to bed Harry was asleep dreaming of witches and wizards.

The next morning Harry woke up from the noise his aunt made by banging on his cupboard door yelling at him to get up and start making breakfast. Harry groaned but got up anyway. After getting dressed he made his way over to the kitchen and started preparing breakfast for his relatives. Of course for many people this so called breakfast would be enough food for several days but to Dudley and Vernon this was just breakfast. 'no wonder they're so fat.' Harry thought looking over at Dudley. He was disgusted when he saw him eating like a pig who had been starved for days. After eating a piece of toast and clearing the table Harry was forced to do some chores which he did reluctantly. While he was doing that he was trying to find a way to get to the bank. Suddenly his aunt yelled at him to come inside, sighing he got up and went inside.

"Boy, here's a list of the things we need from the supermarket. While we go visit some friends you will do the shopping. No fooling around, do you hear me." Petunia screamed in his ear.

"Yes Aunt Petunia." Harry just answered. He was used to her screeching like a banshee anyway. But inside he couldn't be happier because now he had a way to get to the bank without his relatives knowing. He would wait until they left and then he would do the shopping after he came back from the bank. It was perfect he thought.

He went back outside to finish his chores and waited for them to leave.

One hour later Harry was walking towards the bank feeling very nervous. He had the necklace on and he was worried that it wouldn't work or something. But when the employee said 'good afternoon sir' he guessed that the necklace worked just fine. He nodded a good afternoon as well and started talking about how he would like to invest a large amount of money into several companies. The girl who was attending him called for her superior since she wasn't authorized to handle investments. After hearing what Harry wanted to do the man asked Harry to step into his office so they could discuss business. Harry nodded and thanked the girl for her help and went inside the office.

"Welcome Sir, my name is Sebastian Hackwell and I'm responsible for investments here at our bank." Sebastian said introducing himself.

"Thank you Mr. Hackwell. My name is James Evans but please call me James." Harry said. He had to give the name that was written on his papers otherwise it could lead to more trouble than he needed.

"Very well James please call me Sebastian. Tell me, how I can help you?" Sebastian said eager to help a new client.

Harry proceeded to show Sebastian the name of the companies in which he wanted to invest and even when he was told that some companies were a bad investment Harry just shrugged and told that he saw this as a challenge and a hobby hoping he would get lucky. Harry off course knew that said companies would pay off nicely in about a year or two. Sebastian nodded and made the investments, after all who was he to tell what to do with his clients money. About two hours later Harry walked out the bank satisfied that he had succeeded this part of the plan as he started to call his instructions.

After visiting the bank Harry made his way over to the supermarket to do the shopping he had to do for his aunt. On his way home however he passed a large bookstore and figured he might as well get the books on martial arts now so he could start practicing in secret. He quickly went inside and asked the man at the counter where he could

find the books he wanted. The man showed him a shelf filled with books on martial arts, fighting, self defense, weapons and much more. Harry just took books on Aikido and Taekwondo just like his future self had suggested and after looking at some pages in the books he instantly liked what he saw. He could hardly wait to start practicing, if he got good enough then maybe he could teach his cousin a lesson next time he got bullied. Although the punishment he would receive from his aunt and uncle made that idea less attractive. When he got home he saw that his relatives weren't home yet so he quickly put away the groceries and stored his books and his other things inside his cupboard. He had realized that once he was in his cupboard reading would be very difficult with only a small light so he had bought a flashlight that worked on batteries while in the supermarket, he wisely paid for it with his own money.

Later that night Harry was reading the instructions for learning Occlumency. Luckily for him his future self had written them in understandable words since he still was a nine year old, a smart one yes but still a nine year old. The instructions told him that he would first have to learn to meditate and relax before starting on building his defenses. He read what meditating just was and started to try it right away, surprisingly it didn't seem that hard and he found that he enjoyed it very much. The instructions said that he would have to meditate every morning and evening for about half an hour for the next two months so that he would learn how to do it instinctively. After that he would begin the next step of Occlumency. Harry sighed knowing that the next two years would be filled with studying Occlumency and martial arts as well as learning everything he deemed interesting in the muggle world. But he promised himself that he would do everything in his power to protect his future friends and more importantly his future wife.

Well, how was it? Like I said some idea's might already been done but I hope that I can provide you with a story that is worth your time. Please let me know how I did on this first chapter.

The next chapter will be released on the Sunday the 1st of June. See you guys then.

Chapter 2: McGonagall and Diagon Alley

Time flew for young Harry, over the next two years he learned everything he could just like he had promised himself and his future self. He had learned Occlumency and although he didn't have any practical experience at expulsing or repelling an attack on his mind he was pretty sure his mind was protected. The notes had included some suggestions on the way he could build his shields and Harry followed them to the letter. His mind was protected by several layers of shields that were layered on top of each other. The outer layer was a very weak layer that would alert Harry if someone tried to break it, its purpose was not defending his secrets but warning Harry. The next shield held his everyday thoughts and memories, things he didn't mind sharing with others not that he wanted everyone to know everything off course. The next shield was of a higher level that protected things he didn't want everybody to know like personal thoughts on things or people, his dreams or hopes. The last shield was the strongest of the all, it also protected his biggest secrets like everything that was connected with his future self and what he had learned. He was confident that this shield could resist any attack but he still practiced every day to make his shields stronger and more resistant.

Learning Aikido and Taekwondo had been very fun and rewarding as well. Knowing that he wouldn't be allowed to practice at home he started practicing at the small park not far from his relatives home. After studying and practicing for about three months a man came up to Harry saying that he had seen him practicing martial arts for some time now. The man had asked him why he wanted to learn martial arts.

"I want to learn because that way when my friends and family are in danger I can help them." Harry answered truthfully. It was true since he wasn't interested in fighting or hurting people just for fun. That was what this Dark Lord from the future did.

The man was clearly impressed by Harry answer and told him that if Harry wanted they could practice together since he had lots of experience with both fighting styles that Harry was learning. Harry quickly accepted the much needed help and from that day on he and

Joey (as the man introduced himself) met every other day to spar and train together. Joey became somewhat of a very close friend and when Joey moved away to America Harry had been really sad but Joey told him how very proud he was of him and to cheer up. He also made Harry promise that if he ever visited America he would have to come and see him. Of course Harry had every intention of doing so.

Harry's relatives were still as friendly as always but it bothered him less than it used to, he just let them be and ignored them. Last week it had been Dudley's birthday and once again he had gotten a mountain of presents but it still wasn't enough for Dudley. Harry just shook his head pitying his cousin for the lack of brainpower and common sense. Remembering this Harry realized that his own birthday was coming up and that meant that he would soon get his Hogwarts letter. He really wanted to go to Hogwarts after reading the book 'Hogwarts, A History' for like a hundred times, he wished to see the beauty of the castle and the Great Hall that he had read so much about.

He would have to get some money so he could buy himself something. Money was not exactly a problem anymore to Harry, the investments he made two years ago had paid off greatly. He had a small fortune available to him under the name of James Evans. Harry who didn't flaunt or boast about the money hadn't used any of it outside of buying books or some food so he had plenty to spare. So he decided that if he was starting at Hogwarts he would need some new clothes, no way did he want to start his Hogwarts career in the old clothes he received from Dudley. He would see to that tomorrow he thought.

On the day of his birthday Harry woke up very early so he could go to the park to practice his martial arts and also because he knew that the Hogwarts letter would be delivered by owl. If his uncle saw that he would blow up, Harry was sure of that. So when he arrived at the park he quickly did some warm-up exercises and ran some laps around the park. Just when he was starting his third lap an owl landed in front of him with a letter tied to her leg. He made his way over to her and asked the owl if it could stay until he read the letter. The owl hooted once indicating that she understood his request. Harry opened the letter and started reading. When he finished the letter he took out a

pen and started scribbling a reply that hopefully would help him convince this professor to get him to Hogwarts.

Dear Prof. McGonagall,

My name is Harry Potter and I just received this letter by owl. Is this all true because I never heard about magic being real before? My uncle always said that magic doesn't exist. If this is true then I would love to come to your school starting on September 1st but I'm afraid my uncle won't allow me. Maybe you could come and convince him? I would like to go to a new school and actually make some friends since I don't have any my old school.

If I'm allowed to come to your school where do I get the necessary things? Is there a place where I could buy these things? What about money?

With kind regards,

Harry Potter (aspiring first year student)

Yes, this seemed a good way to ask for help from the professor. It was short and to the point without whining about things. Hopefully she would come and visit him soon. He tied the letter to the owl leg and thanked her for a job well done. He then asked her to take this letter to Prof. McGonagall. The owl hooted and took off towards Hogwarts leaving Harry, who wondered if his plan would work, behind. All he could do now was wait and hope for the best. After completing his exercises he headed back so he could prepare breakfast for his relatives. He spend the rest of the day outside reading a book about what the Japanese people called 'Bushido' or the way of the warrior.

The next morning at Hogwarts an older women received the letter that Harry had written the day before. After untying it from the exhausted owl she started reading and a frown appeared on her face. The letter came from James and Lily's son and he didn't even know about magic? She should have know that those Dursley's would keep that from young Harry, well she wasn't going to stand for it any longer. She stood up from her chair and walked outside her office towards the gates of Hogwarts. She thought about informing Dumbledore but

since she was kind of in a hurry she decided to inform him later on. She quickly apparated to where she knew Harry lived. Arriving she made her way over to the front door and knocked.

Vernon, who was enjoying a lazy Saturday morning just yelled at Harry to open the door. Harry just got up from his seat and opened the door wondering who it could be this early in the morning. When he opened the door he saw a woman in some weird clothes, the same style his future self had worn in the hologram. His heart started to beat faster, hoping that this lady was his future professor.

“Good morning, how can I help you?” Harry asked politely.

“Good morning mister Potter. My name is Minerva McGonagall and I’m here to help you convince your relatives so you can attend Hogwarts.” McGonagall said pleased that Harry at least had manners.

“Really? You’re really Prof. McGonagall? Please come inside, my relatives are in the living room. I have to warn you though, they’re not the friendliest people around I’m afraid.” Harry said hoping that his uncle would at least be civil to the lady.

“Thank you for the warning Mister Potter. I’m sure I can handle your relatives just fine, no worries. Shall we go meet them?” She said already disliking the boy’s relatives from the way she saw Harry react.

Harry led her to the living room and opened the door for her, on one hand he was impatient to see how his aunt and uncle would react but on the other hand he was a little worried. He had seen his uncle mad before and it wasn’t a pretty sight. His face would turn purple from anger and veins would start popping up in his neck. His aunt however only yelled and screeched bloody murder when she was angry, that was something he could deal with but popping veins that were on the verge of exploding no thank you.

“Well boy, who was it?” Vernon asked without looking up. Frankly he couldn’t care less, it was his lazy Saturday and he didn’t want to be disturbed. But when he heard Petunia gasp he looked up anyway.

“What is going on here? Who are you? What are you doing in my house?” Vernon almost yelled at her. He recognized that this woman had to be a witch from her clothes. Petunia had told him about those freaks, no way was he going to accept one in his own house.

“Good afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, my name is Minerva McGonagall and I’m a professor at Hogwarts. I’m here today to inform you that Mister Potter here has been accepted to attend Hogwarts starting this September.” McGonagall said calmly. She had dealt with these kind of situations before, not all parents were accepting of magic or allowing their children to start learning magic after all.

“No, absolutely not. We sworn when we took him in that we would put a stop to all this nonsense once and for all. He will not be going, I’m not paying good money so he could go and learn magic tricks.” Vernon yelled and he started to get red in the face. Harry knew however that the red was just one of the colors his face could turn into, purple would be next.

“Mr. Dursley, magic is as real as you and me. You can’t stop a wizard from learning magic, if Harry doesn’t learn to use his magic correctly he would be a danger to himself and to your family. And you don’t have to worry about paying since Harry’s parents already provided for that.” McGonagall said trying to calm the fat man down. She didn’t want him to have a heart attack, at least not while she was here.

When Vernon heard that he wouldn’t have to pay for Harry he actually calmed down a little but he still was fuming mad about all of this. He absolutely hated everything that had to do with magic or freaks. Seeing how his uncle had started to calm down Harry decided to give Vernon the information that would allow him to go to Hogwarts. No way was he going to refuse him after this he knew.

“Uncle Vernon, think about it. If I go to Hogwarts I’ll be out of the house for months only coming back in the summer holidays for the next seven years. And since its all paid for, it won’t cost you a thing.” Harry said. He could literally see his uncle’s face change from raving mad to downright cheery, he could only imagine what his uncle was thinking. Inside however Harry was smirking and wondered if his uncle had any brainpower that wasn’t focused on eating and money.

“Only summer holidays? Very well boy, if and only if you stay the whole year at that school will I allow you to go. At least that way my family and I can enjoy our normal lives away from a freak like you.” Vernon said.

McGonagall, who had stayed quiet for a while couldn't believe her ears. Was this how Harry had grown up, being insulted and unloved for years? She made up her mind right away to speak to Harry about this later on but for now she would deal with these people.

“Mr. Dursley, I can understand that you don't like magic but there's no reason to treat your nephew this way. You can be assured that I will not forget about this anytime soon and if I find out that you have been treating Harry badly in the future I'll will pay you a visit with the magic equivalent of the muggle police.” McGonagall said warning Vernon not to try anything or treat Harry badly.

Vernon and Petunia gasped at the idea of more freaks in their home just nodded not wanting more trouble than they already had. They would have to explain all this to Dudley later on. After that Vernon ordered his family to get in the car and they left as fast as they could away from the freak and the madwoman.

“Wow, I have never seen uncle Vernon move so fast before, or so scared.” Harry said laughing. Seeing his uncle run was like looking at a waterbed being moved, the water going from one side to the other. In his eyes it was one of the funniest things he had ever seen.

McGonagall who normally wouldn't approve of making fun of people smiled as well. The oaf had earned it after all. ‘How dare he treat Harry that way, I knew I should have argued more with Albus’ she thought. She would speak to him about this as soon as she was back to Hogwarts.

“Well Harry, how about we go to Diagon Alley so you can get your supplies for the year?” She said smiling at how Harry immediately became excited. He quickly told her that he would need something from his room and went to get it. He opened the cupboard and took the shoebox and his books from under his bed and put his stuff in a

backpack. He had a plan to stay at Diagon Alley for the rest of the summer so he needed to get his things. When he came back McGonagall just nodded and together they went to the backyard where she told Harry to hold her hand and not let go until she said so. Harry nodded and not a second later both of them disappeared away.

Harry and McGonagall apparated into the alley behind the Leaky Caldron out of sight from the Muggles. Harry was shocked at what had just happened, sure he had read about apparation but he had never done it before until now. He looked at his professor and started asking questions like what just happened (he had to pretend that he didn't know), when he could learn that (which he really wanted to know) making McGonagall chuckle saying that he had a long way to go before learning how to apparate.

Harry nodded disappointed and followed her inside the Leaky Caldron and into Diagon Alley, his professor told him that she didn't have much time so they would have to hurry otherwise she would have to leave him here on his own and that was something she didn't want to do. They quickly made their way over to Gringots so Harry could get some money out of his safe. Harry asked her why she was so sure his parents had left him any money.

"Mister Potter, your parents were some of the best students I ever had the pleasure of teaching, there is no doubt in my mind that they provided you with means to live." She answered confidently.

Harry, who knew almost nothing about his parents quickly asked her if she could tell him about them which she promised to do if he came to visit her in her office once school started. Naturally Harry accepted and he thanked her by giving her a small hug. When they arrived at the counter the goblin had asked Harry about his key, which he didn't have off course so they had to make a new one after confirming he really was Harry Potter. After a quick ride to his vault they were back upstairs with Harry's pockets full of Galleons, Knuts and Sickles enough to last him a year.

Just when they left the bank they heard a loud voice calling Prof. McGonagall. They turned around and Harry saw a really big man

coming at them, he was smiling and waving at them so Harry conclude that the man knew his professor.

“Ah, good morning Hagrid. How are you?” she said smiling.

“Good morning to you too Professor. I’m fine thank you, just finished a request from Prof. Dumbledore.” The man said while looking at Harry. He seemed to recognize the boy from somewhere but couldn’t remember it.

“Hagrid, I would like you to meet Mister Harry Potter who will be joining us at Hogwarts this year. Harry this is Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts.” Minerva said after she had seen Hagrid look at Harry.

“Nice to meet you sir.” Harry politely said.

“Harry Potter? The last time I saw you, you was just a little lad. You look just like your dad but you have your mothers eyes, that’s for sure. Nice to meet you Harry and please call me Hagrid none of that sir business.” Hagrid said.

“Very well Hagrid but Harry and I will have to leave you I’m afraid. I haven’t got much time and we still need to do the shopping for Harry’s supplies.” McGonagall said cutting the conversation short.

“If you want Professor I can spare some time with Harry to do his shopping. I haven’t got anything else planned for the day.” Hagrid proposed.

McGonagall agreed that this was an excellent idea and she told Harry that she would be seeing him on September 1st at Hogwarts. Harry thanked her for everything she had done and promised her that he would make her and his parents proud. She smiled and nodded before she disappeared. Hagrid and Harry started to do his shopping and had a great time together. Harry had gotten his wand after several tries and he felt that this wand was made especially for him. Mr. Ollivander was a bit creepy but very friendly and helpful so he was okay in Harry’s book. Hagrid had surprised Harry with a beautiful owl which Harry called Hedwig. After buying his books and potion

supplies Harry and Hagrid made their way over to the Leaky Caldron to have something to eat, they had worked up an appetite from all this running around.

During that time Hagrid told Harry about Voldemort or you-know-who as most people called him since they were too afraid to say his name. Harry thought that was ridiculous but kept his mouth shut, after hearing the story from his new friend Harry was more dedicated to become a strong wizard so that he could protect everyone he loved. After finishing their meal Hagrid asked if Harry would be able to get back home on his own and Harry quickly reassured him that he could take care of himself. Hagrid nodded and shook Harry's hand saying that they would see each other at Hogwarts and that he was always welcome to visit him during the school year.

Harry relaxed after Hagrid had disappeared in the crowd and started to make his way back to the muggle world. Once he reached the alley he had arrived in he put on his necklace making him look like a thirty year old man and went over to the nearest hotel and went inside. He went straight for the counter and waited his turn.

"Good afternoon sir, how can I help you?" the young lady said when it became his turn.

"Good afternoon, I would like to book a room starting today until September 1st please." Harry said.

"Yes sir, we have 4 rooms available for those periods of time. Three of them are luxury suites however the last one is a room for two with a small bathroom, a king-sized bed and a small balcony." The girl said.

Harry quickly chose the normal room since a suite would be too much for him alone and he didn't need all of that luxury anyway. After paying for his entire stay he received the keys to his room and thanked the girl for her help. He went to his room and put everything inside before he collapsed on the bed.

'So far so good. Now all I have to do is contact the Dursley's to tell them that I'm not coming back until next summer.' Harry thought. He

knew that they would be pleased to get rid of him and he too would be happy so everybody wins. With that thought in mind Harry drifted into sleep both happy and excited.

Next chapter of the story will be released on Sunday the 8th of June so see you guy's then and thank you for reading.

Chapter 3: Start of the future

The month up to September 1st had been one of the best time in Harry's life, he had phoned the Dursley's and told them that he was staying in London until he started school and they were just as happy as he predicted they would be. He didn't care, he liked it in the hotel where he had a very soft bed and excellent food as well. Off course had to wear his necklace all the time he was in the hotel but that didn't bother him at all.

During his stay he had visit Diagon Alley several times, not as Harry Potter but as James Evans since he didn't want to be recognized. He had bought several books on magic like his future self had advised, a magical trunk that held 10 times the original space and a wand holster for his arm. Other than that he bought some extra clothes both Muggle and Wizard style and he also got some contacts for his eyes which he liked very much.

He spend his time reading his books for the first year and he was getting very excited to start learning about magic. The things he read in his books seemed so unbelievable yet so cool although he knew that this wasn't a laughing matter sometimes. He would have to be very serious about studying but he would also make friends and have fun he promised himself. Out of all his books he liked the 'Defense against the Dark Arts' the most even though the first year spells seemed somewhat silly to him. But you have to learn how to walk before you can learn how to run he realized. The second book he liked was his transfiguration book which was taught by Prof. McGonagall. Being able to transfigure something in something else just opened up possibilities Harry never thought possible.

There were some things he didn't like however like the fact the magical world still used a quill and parchment. He had tried to write with the quill but he just didn't succeed in writing fluently and quickly and the mess he made with the ink really made him wonder why anyone would use this. He had bought some Muggle pens and notebooks that he would use if he was allowed. At least that way the teachers would be able to read his assignments. Hopefully he had bought enough of them to last the year he thought.

Harry closed his Charms book after reading the third chapter, he had read and studied at least the first three chapters of every book he had so that he wouldn't get behind in class once school started. Some may think that he was a bookworm but he didn't care one bit. While he didn't like studying for math or normal school subjects, he enjoyed learning about magic very much. To Harry learning magic was a way out of his normal and everyday life he had at the Dursley's, so he couldn't afford to fail. While thinking how great his time at Hogwarts would be he fell into a blissful sleep filled with dreams of magic and adventures.

The next morning Harry woke up after having a good night rest and gathered all his stuff together. Luckily for him he had already started packing a few days ago so he didn't have to hurry. He ordered breakfast before jumping into the shower. After having a wonderful breakfast he went downstairs to check out of the hotel, he nodded to the girl behind the counter and made his way over to her. They had gotten to know each other a little over the past month.

"Hello, Julie how are you today?" Harry asked politely.

"Good morning Mr. Evans, I'm fine thank you very much. I guess you're here to check out of the hotel." Julie answered smiling. She liked the man because unlike other clients he was always friendly and treated her with respect. That and he didn't try to see down her blouse like so many of the male clients.

"Unfortunately yes, my time in London is over so I'm leaving today. I want to thank you for your help and everything you've done for me over the past month." Harry said and he gave Julie a small bouquet flowers that he had bought just for her.

"Mr. Evans, you shouldn't have, but thank you very much for the flowers they're wonderful." Julie said surprised while smelling the flowers aroma.

After some more minutes of small talk Harry bid his goodbye promising that if he ever was around he would come and visit her. He picked up his bags, went outside and called for a taxi who would

bring him to King Cross station. They arrived about 10 minutes later with plenty of time to spare before the train left, Harry unloaded his bag and put them on a cart but before he went inside the station he opened Hedwig's cage and asked her if she wanted to fly to Hogwarts or take the train ride with him. Hedwig nibbled his ear and took off indicating she would rather fly. Harry watch his friend fly through the sky happy that she could spread her wings. He went inside the station and started looking for the platform nine and three quarters, briefly he thought about asking one of the people who worked at the station but he realized that they wouldn't know anything about such a platform. Just then he saw a family who carried about the same luggage as he was so he made his way over to them.

"Excuse me, are you looking for platform nine and three quarters as well?" Harry asked quietly so that only they could hear it.

"Why yes we are. We were told where it was when one of the teachers came to inform us of Hermione's magical abilities." The woman said equally quiet.

"Could I come with you? I haven't been told where to find it." Harry asked. It was true, neither McGonagall nor Hagrid had told him where the platform exactly was.

"Off course, follow us. So you are starting Hogwarts as well this year. My name is Emma Granger and this is my husband Dan and our daughter Hermione." She said introducing her family. She wondered where the boys family was, no child should be alone with no one to say goodbye too in her opinion.

"Nice to meet you all. My name is Harry Potter." Harry said introducing himself.

"It's nice to meet you too Harry. Are you alone here?" ignoring the small gasp her daughter let out when she heard the boys name.

"Euh, yes you see I'm an orphan but I live with my aunt and uncle but they don't like me much so they didn't come. Not that I wanted them too." Harry said softly not wanting the woman's pity. He had long accepted that his parents were dead but he still missed them every

day. They had sacrificed their lives for him by fighting Voldemort trying to give him a future where he could grow up and be happy.

“I’m very sorry Harry, that was kind of rude of me to ask such a question.” She apologized.

“Please don’t be sorry, it’s okay I don’t mind.” Harry said before going over to Hermione.

“Hi, I’m Harry Potter, nice to meet you.” Harry said sticking out his hand.

“Nice to meet you Harry. I’m Hermione Granger.” She said nervously. Until then she hadn’t made much friends in school and she hoped it would change when she got to Hogwarts.

The four of them quickly went through the barrier and came out on the other side where they saw a lot of families saying goodbye to their children, brothers and sisters. Right in front of them stood a magnificent train with a steam engine puffing waiting to depart. The Grangers and Harry stood in awe at the old train for a few moments before they made their way through the crowd. Hermione’s dad helped them put their luggage away and together they went back to the platform to say goodbye.

“Well this is it honey. Have a great time and study hard but try to have some fun as well. We expect some letters once in a while to know how you’re doing.” Emma said hugging her daughter. She saw Harry looking at them with a some envy. She could only imagine how hard it had to be for a young boy like Harry not having anyone to hug him goodbye. She decided to change that right now. She went over to Harry before hugging him as well.

“You too Harry, have a great time and take care of my little girl okay? And send some letters as well, I’m sure you’ll have plenty to tell together with Hermione.” She said while hugging him close. Harry who at first was shocked at being hugged for the first time in his life quickly grabbed hold of Emma and nodded saying that he would protect Hermione and take care of her.

Dan too went over to Harry and gave him a firm handshake saying that he was very glad to get to know him and he too expected to hear from him every once in a while. Harry nodded and said his goodbyes to both of them before boarding the train with Hermione. They quietly entered their compartment and sat down next to the window so they could wave at everyone. And then slowly but surely the train started moving and soon King Cross Station was out of sight.

“So are you just as nervous as I am about all of this?” Harry said trying to break the ice. He never was good with talking to girls before. At least not girls his own age, when he was in his James disguise it all seemed so much simpler.

“Oh yes, I hope I’m good enough, I have read all my books but still I don’t think it will be enough.” Hermione answered shyly. She didn’t want Harry to start laughing at her because she had already read her books like her former classmates did all the time.

“Me too, I haven’t finished them yet but I read at least until the forth chapter of each book just to be prepared. I even bought several other books for reading material.” Harry said glad that Hermione seemed to like reading just as much as he did.

“Really? You like reading too? I’m reading ‘Hogwarts, A History’ right now and its really fascinating.” Hermione beamed at Harry. Maybe just maybe she had found her first real friend.

“I have read that book at least a dozen times, its great isn’t it? I can’t wait to see the castle and the Great Hall.” Harry said starting a in dept conversation about their favorite books and subject. After a few minutes Hermione wanted to ask a question but didn’t know how to ask it without offending her new friend. Harry seeing her getting nervous about something asked her what was wrong.

“Well, I want to ask you something but I’m not sure if I should” she said hesitant.

“Don’t worry, you can ask. I won’t bite you know.” Harry joked trying to reassure her. He had an idea about what the question could be.

“Are you really Harry Potter, the Harry Potter who defeated the Dark Lord Voldemort?” She asked.

“That’s me alright. But before you think I’m a showoff or something I can assure you that I don’t like the fame or the stares that comes with it. I don’t even remember anything about that night. I’m just Harry nothing more, nothing less. And please don’t believe what was written in all those books. It’s absolutely rubbish and lies since nobody knows what happened and I’m the only one who survived and like I said I don’t remember anything.” Harry finished taking a deep breath after such a long explanation.

“I understand, Harry. Don’t worry I won’t bother you asking about all of that. I just wanted to know, I’m very curious I’m afraid.” Hermione said glad that Harry was just a boy like any other.

“Being curious is not a bad thing. To tell you the truth I’m very curious as well. So what do you think is going to happen when we arrive at Hogwarts.” Harry asked her.

Hermione opened her mouth to start talking when the door of their compartment slide open to reveal a young boy with flaming red hair and freckles. He looked around and saw only Harry and Hermione sitting there so he went inside.

“I’m sorry, can I sit here? Everywhere else is full.” The boy asked them.

“Sure, come on in. There’s enough room for all of us.” Harry said after looking at Hermione who didn’t seem to mind.

“Thanks, I’m Ron Weasley by the way.” The boy now know as Ron said.

“Nice to meet you Ron. This is my friend Hermione Granger and I’m Harry Potter.” Harry said introducing both Hermione and himself.

Hermione eyes widened at hearing Harry saying that she was his friend and she immediately smiled at him. She was very glad someone like Harry would consider her as a friend. Not because he

was Harry Potter but because he was such a nice and friendly boy. She promised herself that she would be the best friend she could be to Harry. Meanwhile Ron still hadn't gotten over the shock of being in the same compartment as the great Harry Potter. To the Wizarding world Harry was a hero beyond heroes, children were told bedtime stories about him, books were written and so much more.

"Bloody Hell, Harry Potter. I'm in the same compartment as Harry Potter." He exclaimed loudly making both Hermione and Harry wince at the volume of his voice. Harry was sure that the whole train had heard him yelling.

"Please don't yell. Besides it's not like it's a big deal right? I'm just an ordinary boy who wants to learn about magic. No need to act like a fangirl around me or anything." Harry said hoping that Ron would stop acting like a crazy fan. It was freaking him out, he hated being in the middle of attention and being stared at. Hermione seeing that Harry was starting to get annoyed intervened.

"You know Ron, it's not polite to stare." She said loud enough for him to hear.

Ron quickly apologized for staring and sat down next to Hermione. He then began to ask questions to both of them so that they would get to know each other better. Ron was mortified that both Harry and Hermione had started reading ahead in their books. To him books were a necessary evil, not fun at all. He preferred goofing around and playing Quidditch with his brothers. Studying was something he never enjoyed and never will enjoy of that he was sure.

Somehow the three of them started talking about how Hogwarts would be like and Ron offered some information that he had heard from his older brothers even though it seemed that information was very suspicious to Harry and Hermione. Later on the trip Harry had bought several sweets and candy from the cart and they were happily talking and trying out the several sorts of candy. Harry's favorite was without a doubt the chocolate frog, not because of the card that came with it but because the frog could move around. Hermione too was amazed at seeing all the different kinds of magical candy even if she only ate one or two things.

A few hours later they finally arrived at Hogwarts, and almost all of the first years were trying to look outside the windows trying to see the castle. Unfortunately they couldn't see a thing since it was already dark and the castle just wasn't visible from the train. When they got off the train Harry heard a voice that he would recognize anytime and he look at his right. There stood Hagrid waving a lantern around trying to gather all the first years. Harry quickly grabbed Hermione's hand and told Ron to follow him as well so he could introduce them to Hagrid.

"Hey Hagrid, how are you? I would like you to meet my friends Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley, they're first years as well." Harry proudly introduced his friends.

"Hello there Harry. I'm fine thanks for asking. It's nice to meet your friends as well but for now get inside a boat so we won't be late." Hagrid said while ushering the kids into a boat.

After Hagrid got all the kids onto the boats they departed for a trip across the dark, cold lake which seemed to go on forever before they finally turned a corner and they saw the castle lights in the distance. Harry and Hermione were holding their breath waiting to see if the castle was anything they had imagined in their head thanks to 'Hogwarts, A History'. When the castle was clearly visible both of them just sat speechless in the boat staring at the beauty of the castle. It was nothing like they thought it would be, it was several times more majestic and overwhelming than that. The towers who were lit with light from inside, the moon who gave the castle a mysterious glow that made them think about a past long ago with knights and princesses. Harry immediately felt a connection with Hogwarts, it felt like a welcome home kind of feeling and for the first time he felt right at home too. Hermione too felt right at home as soon as she saw the castle and she had never felt any better than at that moment.

While they were staring at the castle, they had arrived at the bank of the lake and Hagrid told them to get out of the boat and follow him upstairs. Still in a daze the kids followed speaking loudly about the thing they saw along the way, they saw moving portraits, speaking

statues and much more. For those who had grown up in the Muggle world this all seemed so fantastic and new so they were very surprised by all these things while kids who came from the magical world had been used to all this. Hagrid led them into a large room and told them to wait right there until someone came and get them. He wished them the best for the sorting and left the room.

Harry and Hermione were whispering about how great Hogwarts was until a blond boy made his way over to them. Harry recognized the look on the boys face from miles away. This guy would be trouble, Harry just knew it, he could feel it too. The blond boy was obviously quite confident and arrogant by the way he strutted over towards them with his head held high and his nose in the air. Harry sighed, he knew this type of person all too well, he was one of those people who thought they were better than most people because they had more money, more fame and viewed anyone as trash unless they were of the same standing.

“So, it’s true then? Harry Potter has come to Hogwarts.” The blond boy sneered at Harry. Immediately most of the kids started whispering and staring at Harry who just sighed. He just had to say that aloud, why was him being here such a big deal to these people he wondered.

“My name is Malfoy, Draco Malfoy.” Draco said while sticking out his hand. Harry snorted inside, if this guy thought they would become friends he had a wild imagination.

“It’s important for people like us to have the right connections, I can provide you with that. You shouldn’t bother with these low class losers, they will only hold you down.” Malfoy continued acting like he was the most important person in the whole castle.

Harry would have just ignored him had he not insulted his new friends and that was something Harry wouldn’t allow, not from a stuck up blond twit who thought that he was God’s gift to mankind. He was going to nip this in the bud before this become a too big problem to deal with. He turned towards Malfoy and stared him right in the eyes not blinking just waiting for Malfoy to react. It didn’t even take 5

seconds before Malfoy started to feel uncomfortable and looked away. Harry took a step forward so that he was right in front of Malfoy.

“Malfoy right? I would advise you from insulting my friends from now on, next time I won’t be so nice and let it slide. I don’t care who you are, insult my friends again and I’ll won’t be so nice.” Harry said politely but everyone understood the message ‘Don’t mess with me or my friends’ .

“Who do you think you’re talking to Potter? I’m a Malfoy, one of the oldest pureblood families so you should show me some respect and be glad I offer you my friendship.” Malfoy said trying to save his imago. It wouldn’t do to be humiliated on the first day.

“Like I said, I don’t care who you are or who your family is. For all I care you’re the Queen of England, nobody insults my friends. And your friendship doesn’t interest me, if this is how you treat your friends I’m better off without it. Now leave us alone and don’t bother me again.” Harry calmly said. He wouldn’t let this guy walk over him but he wouldn’t provoke him either.

Malfoy was about to say something, probably an insult but just then the door opened and Prof. McGonagall walked in telling them to follow her to the great hall where they would be sorted. Hermione quickly followed Harry amazed at how he had handled the situation with Malfoy. She was a little scared of how Harry would react to Malfoy’s offer but once again Harry had proven himself to be a great guy and an even better friend. She also wondered how Harry stayed so calm and confident when he confronted Malfoy, if she had been in his place she would have been terrified of standing up for herself. It happened all the time in her previous school where she was often the victim of teasing and bullying.

Those thought just disappeared when they entered the Great Hall, she was completely blown away by the magical feeling she felt inside the Hall. It was everything she thought it would be and maybe even more, amazed she looked at Harry who had the same expression on his face. They looked around not wanting to miss the smallest detail of the place where they would eat and have fun for the next couple years. Prof. McGonagall told them to stand in front of the large table

were the other teachers were seated and explained how the sorting was done. After her explanations she started calling the students one by one and placed the hat on their head. One after another students were sorted in Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin and when Hermione was called she nervously made her way over. Harry wish her good luck and told her she would do fine, she gave him a small smile and sat on the small stool before the hat was placed on her head.

“Well, what do we have here? Very interesting indeed, young lady. A great thirst for knowledge, loyal to those you love and courage, yes lots of courage. Now where to put you?” Hermione heard in her head. At first she was startled but quickly realized that this was the hat who spoke to her. But before she could say something the hat yelled out.

“Better be Gryffindor!” sounded throughout the Hall. Harry and the students at the Gryffindor table started clapping and Hermione made her way over to the table quickly sitting down. She nodded at Harry showing she was okay. He smiled and turned back towards the sorting. Finally, after several more student is was his turn.

“Potter, Harry.” McGonagall called out and like magic the whole Hall become quiet, everyone trying to see where the famous Harry Potter was and what he looked like. Students started whispering and talking amongst themselves and when Harry finally stepped forward it became quiet once again. To Harry this had to be one of the most embarrassing moments of his life, he hated being in the spotlight and right now he was in the middle of it. He sat down and waited for the hat to be placed on his head.

“Oh my, this is quite unexpected. Such a well protected mind you have young Harry. Occlumency, I wonder where you learned that? Hmm, a letter from yourself? Amazing.” The hat started.

“Please don’t tell anyone about that. Nobody can know about this, it would bring much trouble.” Harry pleaded with the hat. He wondered if his Occlumency shields weren’t as strong as he thought they were.

“Don’t worry Mr. Potter, your secret is safe with me. And don’t worry about your shields, I’m build to pass through that kind of shields. Now

where shall I put you? You have the qualities of all four houses after all.” The hat admitted.

“Well, I was hoping to be in Gryffindor like my parents and my friend Hermione.” Harry said hoping the hat would agree.

“Yes, you would do very well in Gryffindor. Lots of courage and bravery, and you and Miss Granger will definitely work well together. Very well then.” The hat chuckled before yelling out Gryffindor. Harry thanked the hat and walked over to the Gryffindor table who was currently going out of their mind yelling and screaming ‘We got Potter!’. Harry just sighed and sat down next to Hermione who was obviously very happy that they got sorted in the same house.

After that the sorting went pretty quickly and finally it was time to start dinner. Harry was famished and couldn’t wait for the food to arrive. He saw the old man in the middle stand up and assumed that this was Dumbledore.

“Welcome to our new students and welcome back to our old students. There’s a time for talking and this is not it. Enjoy the food.” And he made a big gesture with his arms and the food just appeared on the table. Harry didn’t have to be told twice and started filling up his plate with delicious looking food. All the students were having a great time talking to each other about their holiday adventures or getting to know each other, people were laughing and having fun. Harry looked at his right and saw Hermione enjoying some pumpkin juice and a bit further Ron was attacking a whole plate of food all by himself, it looked like he hadn’t eaten in days by the way he was shoveling food into his mouth. Several students were watching with a look of pure disgust on their face and Harry wondered if Ron had been taught table manners as a kid. Hermione had seen Harry looking to her right and looked what seemed so interesting, when she saw Ron she quickly turned back revolted that someone could eat that way. Seeing the look on Hermione’s face made Harry laugh and she too couldn’t hold back a chuckle.

After a while Harry started talking with one of the older students called Percy Weasley who explained that Ron and the twins a little further were his younger brothers , he warned Harry for the twins

since they liked to play pranks on people all the time. Harry nodded already thinking of how he should get to know them since he loved a good prank once in a while. He then started asking about the teachers eager to get to know who was who and Percy started by describing them one at a time. But when they came to the resident Potion Master called Severus Snape things got a little weird because once Harry looked over to him he found the man staring at him. Harry was surprised that the man had a hateful look in his eyes, a look of pure dislike and contempt, a look Harry knew all too well thanks to his relatives. He wondered what he had done to make the man hate him or dislike him that much, couldn't be something bad since he had never met the man. He asked Percy a bit about the Potion Master and the things he heard weren't reassuring to say the least. Just then he dared to take one look at the man and instantly felt a sharp pain in his head where his scar was. Harry winced and a small yell of pain escaped his mouth causing Hermione to ask if everything was alright. Harry quickly reassured her by saying he had a small headache.

Finally everyone had stopped eaten, even Ron had finally satisfied his hunger and the Headmaster started talking about how glad he was that everyone was there and he gave a few warnings like not to go into the forbidden forest or the third floor which was strictly forbidden this year. After that he made every student sing the school song, which sounded horrible thanks to everyone just singing off key and with wrong timing but Dumbledore seemed to think it was just wonderful. He then dismissed them sending them to their beds since classes started early the next morning. Harry and Hermione quickly agreed to meet at 7 am to have breakfast together and went to bed both impatient to start learning about magic.

Thanks for reading the chapter and I hope you enjoyed it so far. The next chapter will be released on Sunday 15th of June. See you guys then.

Chapter 4: 'Defeating a troll' for dummies

After a wonderful rest in a soft bed Hermione woke up about 20 minutes before she had to meet up with Harry for breakfast. She had met her roommates and while they seemed very nice and friendly they were a whole lot different than she was. Her roommates had talked for an hour about makeup, boys, fashion and girls stuff. Hermione however never was really into fashion and all that girl stuff, no she preferred reading a good book instead of wasting hours deciding what clothes to wear or in what color she wanted to paint her nails. But in the end she thought that she could become friends with them even if they would never be the best of friends. After taking a quick shower and getting dressed she went downstairs to the common room to wait for Harry, however when she arrived he was already waiting for her while reading a bit in his potion book.

"Good morning Harry, didn't expect you to be here already. Sorry if I made you wait." Hermione said.

"Don't worry Hermione, I'm used to getting up early so I just couldn't sleep anymore. Did you sleep well?" Harry said putting his book down. He was used to getting up early to prepare breakfast for the Dursley's so he couldn't sleep much longer than 6 am.

"I slept well, the beds are really soft here aren't they? How about you?" She asked.

"Well, once I got used to Ron's snoring I slept very well. I swear, Ron's snoring would make a bear who's hibernating wake up." Harry said making Hermione laugh.

They made their way over to the Great Hall and Harry told her what Percy had said about Severus Snape and how he had received such a look from the Potion Master. That was the reason he had read the first chapters of his book on Potions again just to make sure he was prepared. Hermione nodded saying that she too got a bad feeling about the man who seemed very unpleasant. When they arrived at the Great Hall there were only a few students already there and none

of them were Gryffindor's. While they were having breakfast Prof. McGonagall came over with their class schedule.

"Good morning Mr. Potter, Miss Granger. I'm happy to see 2 of my new Gryffindor's up so early." She said while handing them a piece of paper.

"Good morning Prof. McGonagall. It's nice to see you again, I wanted to thank you again for everything you've done for me last month." Harry said politely. He really like her, she had a strict appearance but she was really friendly and helpful to him.

"Think nothing of it Mr. Potter, it was my pleasure. I'm glad to see you already made a friend here with Miss Granger, I'm sure the two of you will get along very well." McGonagall said smiling at the two kids sitting in front of her.

"We met in King Cross and we've become great friends, haven't we Hermione?" Harry said beaming at his friend. Hermione blushed a bright red and nodded smiling as well.

"Well, I shall see the both of you after breakfast for your first lesson in Transfiguration. I expect good results from the both of you." McGonagall said before nodding her goodbye and returning to her seat.

Harry then had to explain how he had met Prof. McGonagall which led to explaining a bit about the Dursley's which shocked Hermione when she heard how Harry was treated by his relatives. She couldn't understand how somebody could treat their own family like that but Harry said he was used to it by now and that when he was of age, he would just move out and never think about them again. Beside now that he was going to Hogwarts he wouldn't see them for months which was a very good thing in his eyes. Hermione accepted Harry's words but she still thought she should tell her parents about this but it could give Harry much more problems than he already had so she decided to let it be for the time being.

Hermione look at her schedule and asked Harry if he wanted to go the classroom early so they could practice a bit before class started.

That way they would have some experience in doing magic. Harry eager to do his first piece of magic readily agreed off course saying it was an excellent idea. So then minutes later they had found the correct classroom and sat down in front on the second row. Hermione opened her book and started reading out loud what was written in the first chapter. It said that Transfiguration was the magical art of turning one object into another object. Of course there were some limitations but as long as you staying inside the limits you could do almost anything. Harry, having read the chapter as well could already imaging what kind of things they would be learning. Unfortunately they didn't have anything to transfigure so they just read and talked till class started.

Tired Harry sat down in a soft, red and fluffy couch after the first day of classes. He had seriously underestimate this magic business he thought. Hermione too had been surprised at how intensive learning about magic was. The day had been a rollercoaster of emotions from excitement, pride and happiness to embarrassment and anger. The day had started well in Transfiguration and Charms but had ended in misery with Potion.

Flashback

"Good morning class, I'm Prof. McGonagall and I will instruct you in the art of Transfiguration. Before we start on our first try in Transfiguration a word of caution, I will not tolerate foolishness of any kind. Transfiguration is an important part of magic and therefore can be dangerous if used in the wrong way. While you are in my classroom you will behave and obey my teachings. I will not hesitate to dock points or assign detentions and if you still don't shape up I will personally kick you out of my class." She said seriously. Harry and Hermione immediately sat a little straighter in their seat hoping that they wouldn't get kicked out of class.

After a short introduction of Transfiguration and the use in everyday life they finally got to start doing their first piece of magic. They had to try and transfigure a matchstick into a needle, which proved to be more complicated than they first thought. They had to perfectly visualize the needle before doing the necessary wand movements. This took some tries for both Harry and Hermione but both of them

succeeded in transfiguring their matchstick into a perfect needle much to McGonagall surprise. She hadn't expected someone to succeed in the assignments in the first lesson. Just like she thought Harry and Hermione were talented in the art of magic. Harry she had expected since both of his parents were very talented during their time in Hogwarts but neither of them had succeeded this feat in their first lesson. Hermione was a Muggleborn witch thus she had no prior education or training and she too had made a perfect needle meaning she had excellent grasp of the theory.

"Very well done Mr. Potter, Miss Granger a perfect needle. 10 points to both of you for an excellent piece of transfiguration." McGonagall said with pride. She would keep an eye on those two, they could prove to be the next generations best witch and wizard.

Harry and Hermione blushed from the praise they received and the stares of their fellow classmates. The lesson passed fast after that and before they knew it they had passed their first class in their Hogwarts career. The following lesson was Charms with the very small but energetic Prof. Flitwick who Harry liked straight from the start thanks to his enthusiasm. During the lesson they learned the correct way making the wand movement necessary for Charms and after that he explained what kind of Charms existed in the magical world. After a very enjoyable lesson it was time for lunch and almost all of the students were famished but very excited. Ron had joined Harry and Hermione for lunch so they could catch up a little, Ron was complaining that he couldn't do the transfiguration in the morning. Harry assured him that he would get it in the next lesson.

After lunch they had a double Potion class with the feared Prof. Snape who's reputation had already spread amongst the first years Gryffindor's. They were unlucky however since they had the class with the first years of the Slytherin house. And everybody knew how much Snape favored his own house, so most of the Gryffindor's were prepared for the worst Harry included. He hadn't forgotten the looks he received from the man at dinner last night.

When they arrived at the dungeon they found it closed so they had no choice but to wait outside until their teacher arrived or opened the door. At exactly one minute before the hour the door opened

revealing Prof. Snape who just ordered them inside. They quickly went inside and found a seat already fearing what could happen next.

“There will be no silly wand-waving or fancy incantations. This class will teach you the most noble art of potion making, although I doubt most of you will be able to comprehend the subtlety that is potion making.” Snape said coldly. Nobody dared to move cause none of them wanted to be the victim of Snape’s anger. “I will teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory or to stopper death. Now, let’s see what you dunderheads know about potions.” Snape said while scanning the crowd for a victim he could use. Suddenly a sneer developed on his face indicating he had found the unlucky student. Most of them were already trembling and hoping that they wouldn’t get picked. Ron especially was very nervous since he knew absolutely nothing about potions or potion making.

“Potter! Yes, our resident celebrity, what an honor to have you in my class.” Snape said sarcastically showing that he didn’t consider it an honor at all. “Tell me, what do I get if I added powdered root of Asphodel to an infusion of wormwood.” He said sneering since he thought Harry was just a dunderhead like the rest of them.

“It would result into a powerful sleeping potion known as ‘Draught of Living Death’, sir.” Harry said feeling immensely glad that he read over the first few chapters of his book that morning. He inwardly smiled because Snape’s face betrayed that he didn’t expect Harry to know the answer.

“Well, look at that. Potter can be taught. Lucky shot I’m sure. Next question Potter, where would you look if I asked you for a bezoar?” Snape said again at Harry.

“I believe a bezoar is a stone that is very effective against most poisons and it can be found in the stomach of a goat sir.” Harry answered confidently knowing he had given the correct answer.

“Lucky again Potter, what’s the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane? Snape said starting to get irritated at the boy.

Harry didn't know that one since he hadn't reached that chapter yet so thought about it for a moment but nothing came up so he had no choice and said he didn't know the answer to that question.

"Seems to me that you're not as smart as you thought you were, Potter. For your information there is no difference since they are the same plant." Snape sneered at Harry and some Slytherin students started snickering at Harry.

After a few seconds of gloating Snape assigned them a potion they should make by following the instructions on the board that had appeared. They each got a cauldron and started brewing their potion. It seemed pretty straightforward to Harry and Hermione so their brewing went without trouble. That couldn't be said for Ron and a boy named Neville Longbottom who both were submitted to Snape's ice cold glare after their cauldron exploded making a mess in their corner of the room. Both of them got detention and point reduction from Gryffindor.

End Flashback

It was now the last day of their first week at Hogwarts and Harry was getting very excited about the next lesson. Today they would learn how to fly on a broomstick, ever since he heard about it Harry had been fascinated and was anxious to try it. Hermione however was not so happy about having to learn how to fly and it took Harry a few hours of asking and begging to find out the reason for Hermione's fear. She was afraid of heights and was terrified of falling off the broom but Harry managed to calm her down by promising her that he would stay with her every step of the way.

Prof. Hooch ordered all of them to line up next to a broom that laid on the ground and place their hand right above it. Then she told them to concentrate and say "up", if they did it correctly the broom would raise into their hands. All of the students started to yell and scream but for most off then the broom just refused to move even an inch. Harry however who had experience with meditation just closed his eyes and relaxed for a second before giving the command and the next thing he knew his hand held the broom. When he looked around him he saw that he was the first to succeed, he laughed softly when Ron's

broom hit him square on the nose causing Ron to yell out in pain. He saw that Hermione was having trouble so he went over her, he somehow that her fear of flying was hindering her in succeeding.

“Hey Hermione, how are you doing? Any luck?” Harry asked even if he already knew the answer.

“No, it just won’t move. I don’t understand, what am I doing wrong?” she said irritated that she couldn’t get the broom to move.

“Let me tell you how I did it maybe that will help. Alright, first just close your eyes. Okay, now picture the broom lying on the ground in your mind. Do you see it?” Harry said. Hermione nodded showing she understood. “Good, now picture the broom floating up until it reaches your hand. Now, picture it while focusing on your magic and then say ‘up’. That should do the trick.” Harry said confident that his friend would succeed.

Hermione listened to Harry’s words and started picturing how the broom would float into her hand, after a few times she deemed herself ready to try it for real. So she concentrated on her magic and said ‘up’ while imagining the broom to go up. She was totally surprised when she felt the texture of the wooden broom in her hand. Opening her eyes she saw that she had a firm grip on the broom, she looked over at Harry, who was smiling at her, and then she let out a small cry of success. Before she could thank Harry however Prof. Hooch had come over as she had seen Harry talk to Hermione.

“Very well done, Miss Granger. I don’t know what Mr. Potter told you but it seemed to have worked very well. Nicely done, both of you.” She praised both of them before turning away to help a few other students who were having trouble.

After that the lesson progressed nicely and Harry helped Hermione on how to mount her broom and hover slightly above the ground, she was terrified but somehow with Harry next to her she felt safe enough to try. Harry felt like a fish in water on the broom, it felt good to be free and he quickly got the hang of flying. After two hours of flying lessons, they were now free for the weekend and Harry and Hermione decided that they would spend the time together exploring

the castle and preparing for next week lessons. Ron agreed to accompany them for the exploration of the castle but didn't want to spend his weekend studying since exams were still months away.

Time flew for Harry over the next few weeks and before he knew it the month October had reached to an end. There would be a big feast tonight for the celebration of Halloween and everybody but Harry was excited about it. Hermione had seen how Harry reacted when he heard about the celebration so she went over to him and asked him what was wrong. She and Harry had become the best of friends, they practically spend every minute together, though Harry had a few friends outside Hermione like his roommates, so she could read his emotions fairly well by now.

"Hey, you seem somewhat down. What's up?" she asked quietly since they were in the library.

"Oh, it's nothing Hermione. Don't mind me, I'll be fine." Harry said trying to evade the question. He didn't want her to worry needlessly.

"Come off it Harry, something is bothering you and I want to know what. We're friends right?" She said. Harry always did this she thought. As soon as she asked him something personal he shuts down.

"Of course we're friends. Fine, it's just that for me Halloween also means the anniversary of my parent's death so I feel kind of sad and a little lonely." Harry admitted.

"Oh Harry, I'm sorry. I should have known about that, I'm such a idiot." She said before giving Harry a small hug.

"It's okay, I'll be fine." He said quietly before Madam Pince kicked them out of the library.

"Don't be silly Harry, tell you what. Why don't we, I mean the both of us, leave the feast early and then hold a small remembering ceremony for your mum and dad?" She said.

“Really? You would do that for me? I would love that very much, thanks Hermione. You’re the best friend ever.” Harry said very glad to have such a good friend.

Hermione just smiled and nodded before turning back to her book on first year Charms. She felt very pleased and proud of herself for being able to help her friend out in trouble. Harry too started reading again in his book called ‘Curses and spells for the young warrior’, the book was immensely detailed on spells used in official duels. Most of the spells were still too advanced for Harry to use but some of them he should be able to do, like the cutting curse which was a low level curse but a very efficient one. He had also started learned a spell that would create a shield in front of him called ‘Protego’ which he definitely wanted to master.

So a few hours later Harry and Hermione slipped out of the Great Hall and went to an unused classroom and held a small ceremony to pay their respect to Harry’s parents. They each said a little prayer and thanked them for their sacrifice. Harry also promised to make them very proud of him while Hermione promised them to protect Harry from danger. After a few moment of recollection both of them stepped outside the classroom and made their way over to the Gryffindor common room. Along the way however Harry and Hermione started to smell something and it seemed the smell was getting stronger and stronger as they walked. All of a sudden they heard a loud noise, something that sounded like a loud grunt, not only that they heard footsteps coming their way. Harry had a bad feeling and grabbed hold of Hermione’s arm preventing her from turning around the corner. When she felt Harry grab her, she turned around to ask him what was wrong when she saw his eyes grow wide and looking right behind her.

She turned her head just enough to see a big green and smelly troll standing there with a large club in his hands staring back at them. She stood frozen in fear from the monster and just stared at it before Harry shook her out of her shock and started slowly backing away from the troll. Harry too started taking a few steps back not wanting to provoke the enormous troll but somehow it just raised his club and took a huge swing at both of them. Harry pushed Hermione out of the way and jumped to a side himself thus saving both their lives as the club cracked several tiles where it hit the ground. The troll just looked

at both of them as if he was deciding which target to attack first. For a reason he picked Hermione and turned his back at Harry and started raising his club again. Hermione panicked from fear and seemed glued to the floor unable move an inch.

Harry realizing that Hermione would get killed or seriously hurt if he didn't do anything decided to take action. He quickly grabbed his wand and pointed it at the troll large back and yelled out 'Diffindo'. The spell impacted on the trolls back and a cut appeared making the troll stop his advancement. The cut didn't pierce the trolls skin very deeply but it made the troll turn around towards Harry who realized that he wasn't strong enough to take on a full-sized troll by himself. The troll however decided that Harry was now the most interesting target and made to attack him. He raised his club and tried to bash in Harry's head who quickly rolled out of the way out of the trolls reach. His martial arts training kicking in, he hurried over to Hermione and yelled at her to get up and run. Hearing Harry yell made Hermione aware of what was happening and she bolted in the opposite direction from the troll with Harry. The troll however wasn't going to give up so fast and followed in pursuit albeit much slower than Harry and Hermione. Both of them descended a long staircase and Harry come up with a plan. He had read a spell that he could use in this case and stopped running when he reached the base of the stairs.

"Harry, come on we have to run! What are you doing?" Hermione frantically said.

"I have a plan, just wait there for me." Harry said confident. He was sure his plan was going to work, it had to work otherwise they would be in trouble.

When he saw the troll reaching the stairs he got ready to launch the spell that would end this. The troll just started to descend the stairs several steps at the time, and Harry pointed his wand at the stairs and yelled out 'Glisseo' causing the stairs to become a slippery slide and jumped away from the stairs. The troll who lost his footing just slid down the stair at a neck breaking speed and when he came at the base of the stairs he impacted head first against the hard and ancient walls of Hogwarts knocking him out. Harry held his breath half expecting that the troll would get up but after half a minute he knew

that they were out of danger for now. He went over to Hermione ready to run again but just then Prof. McGonagall, Prof. Snape and the headmaster arrived at the scene.

“What is the meaning of this Mr. Potter. All students were ordered to their common room.” Prof. McGonagall said shocked at the sight of a knockout troll.

Harry and Hermione quickly told their professors what had happened and why they weren't in the Great Hall resulting in them not knowing that there was a troll inside the school. McGonagall sighed and stopped glaring at both of them when she heard that they had held a small service for Harry's parents. She hadn't thought about the fact Halloween was anything but a happy day for Harry. Snape however just snorted at the idea and commented that Potter had obviously disregarded the rules thus deserved to be punished but McGonagall quickly ended that idea by awarding 30 points to Harry and Hermione for defeating such a strong opponent. The Headmaster too congratulated them for a job well done and then dismissed them saying that he would take care of the rest. Both kids didn't have to be told twice and quickly ran off to the safety of the Gryffindor common room.

Once they were inside the common room both Harry and Hermione felt the adrenaline leave their bodies and slumped into a soft couch both exhausted from the experience. Harry felt very proud, not only because he had defeated (okay actually Hogwarts walls had knocked the troll out but hey details) a troll but most of all because he had succeeded in protecting his best friend from harm. He had kept his promise and this made him feel really good about himself. Hermione however felt very disappointed about herself, she had been absolutely useless during the fight with the troll, she had frozen in fear and couldn't do anything to help Harry. She had just promised to protect Harry from harm and at the first sign of danger she was of no help. She shuddered at the thought of what could have happened if Harry wasn't there to protect her.

“I'm sorry Harry, I was so afraid that I couldn't move. I guess I'm just not brave enough to fight like you.” She said softly.

“Nonsense Hermione, don’t worry about it. It’s very normal to be scared when being in such a situation.” Harry said while smiling at his friend.

“But I didn’t do anything to help you. I just sat there when you saved me, I should have helped you fight it.” She protested strongly.

“Hermione, being afraid is nothing to be ashamed over, I too was afraid but I was even more afraid that you would get killed or hurt so I just did the first thing that came into my mind.” Harry said while holding her hand.

“But where did you learn those spells? I know that they’re not in any of my books.” Hermione started asking when she remembered the spells Harry used.

“Ah, I read those in a book I bought in Diagon Alley. It’s called ‘Curses and Spells for the young warrior’ and it’s got some very good spells that you can use in battle.” Harry said hoping she wouldn’t inquire any further. Off course that was impossible as this was Hermione who we’re talking about.

“Young warrior? Harry, why would you need to learn that kind of magic?” She asked narrowing her eyes making Harry slightly nervous.

“Because I made a promise to become strong and powerful enough to protect those I love.” He said seriously.

“A promise? To who?” she fired back at him. Something was going on here and she would find out no matter what it would take.

“I’m sorry Hermione but I can’t answer that question. I want too but I can’t, not without certain preparations.” He said hoping she wouldn’t be mad at him for not being able to tell her.

“Preparations? So if you could prepare you would tell me?” she asked slightly disappointed that she couldn’t know.

“Actually, it’s you who would have to prepare and learn before I can tell you anything. But I warn you right now, it will take a lot of time and effort, probably several months.” He warned her.

Hermione just nodded and asked for more information so Harry started explaining that she would have to learn Occlumency so she would be able to protect her mind and their secrets. Off course she was immediately interested in learning such a skill and promised to work hard at it. Still Harry warned her that it took him almost two year before mastering Occlumency but he told her that if she had questions he would help her in any way he could. He told her that he would give her the necessary notes the next day so she could start studying as soon as possible. After that both went to their rooms to get some sleep after a very exciting day and night.

Thank you for reading the chapter. Did you guys like how I dealt with the troll? I just had the picture of a troll sliding down and then hitting the wall in my head all of the sudden and I liked it so much that I decided to use the idea.

The next chapter will be released on June 22th.

See you guys then.

Chapter 5: Man's best friend

Almost two months had passed since the incident with the troll and Christmas was approaching fast and many students were getting anxious to go home and spend some time with their friends and family. Harry however would stay at Hogwarts like he had agreed with his relatives, not that he wanted to spend his holidays with them anyway. No, Harry had enough things going on to spend his time well at Hogwarts. Harry was currently helping Hermione with her Occlumency which was going very good he had to admit. Hermione proved to be a very good student although she said that Harry was an excellent teacher as well. Hermione had already passed the first step of learning how to meditate and calm her mind and was now beginning to create the very basics of what would eventually become her shields, she had chosen to use the same layout as Harry since he told her that it proved to be very effective and strong.

Hermione would go home for the holidays to see her family who she missed very much. Over the past few months both Harry and she had been sending letters with Hedwig to her parents who were delighted to hear from them. They always send a reply back telling how glad they were to hear from them and asking several question about their time at Hogwarts and their adventures. She had even told them about the troll, needless to say her parents were a little shocked that something like that could happen but they were very thankful to Harry for saving Hermione from the troll. They had invited him over for the holidays as well but Harry politely refused saying he wanted to give them some time together as a family. Still, they had invited him over for the summer and that Harry gladly accepted since it would give him a reason to get away from the Dursley's.

Over the past two months they had discovered that something very important was being guarded at Hogwarts but no matter how much they had tried to figure out what it was, they didn't have in luck finding out. It had all began after Harry, Hermione and Ron came face to face with a very big dog that had three heads.

Flashback

Harry and Hermione just exited the classroom after a very interesting class on Transfiguration with Prof. McGonagall. Both of them were one of the best students in class and the professor commented quite often about on their excellent skills. Off course, this led to some problems with other students like Ron who thought they were sucking up to the teachers. Harry and Hermione just ignored them and continued to do their best but that day Malfoy had come up to them and started insulting them.

“Think you’re so great don’t you Potter? Think you’re better than us just because you’re good at Transfiguration.” He sneered at Harry who looked bored since Malfoy insulted them on regular basis.

“Just go away Malfoy, I have nothing to say to the likes of you.” Harry just said hoping Malfoy would get the hint and leave. Unfortunately, Malfoy stayed anyway.

“I bet that you wouldn’t last five seconds in a real duel, Potter.” Malfoy said knowing that everyone understood the underlying message.

“Is that a challenge, Malfoy? Be careful what you wish for cause it could blow up in your face.” Harry said rising to the challenge. Hermione too had understood what Malfoy was implying and she didn’t like this one bit. Malfoy was one of those people who never played fair in their life, there had to be a catch to all of this. She would stay close to Harry so she could help him if necessary.

“You know what, Potter? It actually is, you’re not afraid are you?” Malfoy sneered at Harry while some of the Slytherin students started laughing.

“I have no reason to be afraid of you Malfoy. You know what they say about dogs that bark, don’t you?” Harry answered smirking as he saw that Malfoy didn’t know the Muggle saying and it was confusing him even more.

After that Malfoy told Harry to meet him in the trophy room at midnight so they would see who was the better wizard. Malfoy said that he would take Crabbe as his second in the fight. Harry too needed a second and he was surprised when Hermione stepped up

and pronounced herself as his second. He was very glad for that since she too had been studying very hard and both of them knew a lot of spells no first year should know or should be able to perform. When Malfoy had left Hermione voiced her concerns saying that most likely this was a trap to get them in trouble, Harry replied that he had the exact same thought but reassured her that he had a plan of some sort. Neither of them had seen that Ron had followed the conversation and was looking to be part of this as well.

When it was time to leave the common room, Harry quietly went down the stair only to find Ron waiting for him. After some heated discussion Harry and Hermione accepted Ron to come since they were pretty sure Malfoy would bring some of his friends as well. Hermione asked what Harry's plan was since he didn't want to tell her that earlier on. Harry smiled and asked her if she had heard about the Disillusionment Charm that would make them temporally invisible and then performed the spell causing him to vanish from sight. Both Hermione and Ron were staring at what now was an empty space where Harry stood a few seconds ago. Harry undid the spell and became visible again with a big grin on his face. Ron just stared at Harry before letting out a quiet 'blimey' and Hermione instantly asked how to perform the spell which Harry quickly explained before applying the spell to all three of them.

They left the common room and made their way over to the trophy room without encountering anyone. When they arrived they didn't see anyone inside the room so they waited for Malfoy and his goons to arrive. After waiting for several minutes they knew that he wouldn't come anymore and they started to get ready to return to the Gryffindor common room when they heard a noise. Ron turned around and saw Mrs. Norris, the cat of Mr. Filch who was the caretaker of the castle.

"It's Mrs. Norris, we have to run. Where she is Filch isn't far behind. If we get caught we're done for." Ron said starting to panic. And if by bad luck Harry's Charm just faded making them visible as well.

Harry just looked around and motioned to Hermione and Ron to follow him. He ran through the hallways trying to find a good place to hide from Mrs. Norris and Filch but so far no luck. They ran up the

stairs not noticing that the stairs had moved and led them to the forbidden third floor. All of the sudden Harry realized where they were and looked at Hermione who seemed to have realized it as well. Mrs. Norris was still on their tail so they had no choice but to continue running, they could hear Filch arriving as well calling out for his pet. They come up to a huge door and Ron seemed to try to open it but it didn't budge an inch and he was starting to get irritated and scared. Hermione just pushed Ron out of the way and used an 'Alohamora' to open the door and they quickly ran inside to hide.

They had entered the room just in time because Filch appeared not even two seconds later looking for intruders or students out of bed. Seeing no one he just called for his cat and they went back to their usual rounds. Harry and Hermione released the breath they had been holding for all this time and started to relax but Ron, who was facing the other way just started shaking and frantically tapped Harry shoulder trying to get his attention.

"What's wrong Ron, we're okay now." Harry said without turning around. He was still trying to calm down from the rush. Ron however didn't stop and Harry turned around starting to get annoyed. Hermione too turned to see what was bothering Ron enough to harass Harry that way.

Both of them just gasped when they saw a huge dog sitting there, not just any dog but a dog with three head. Harry would have been fascinated with the creature if he wasn't staring it straight into two of its six eyes. Hermione too started trembling and grabbed hold of Harry's arm for support. The three of them slowly stepped back to the door before the dog started attacking which could be any moment now if his growling and baring its fangs was any indication . They stumbled out of the room and quickly closed the door ensuring that the dog couldn't follow them outside. They ran like the devil himself was behind them and went back to the common room where they collapsed into the couch.

"Bloody hell, what kind of monster was that?" Ron exclaimed after catching his breath.

"I don't know but I'm not going back to find out, that's for sure." Harry said trying to come up with a reason why there would be such a animal inside the castle.

"It was a Cerberus, a magical animal but that's not important. Didn't you guy's see that it was standing on a trap door?" Hermione added.

"No, I didn't see that. I was kind of looking at his big fangs and eyes." Ron said sarcastically. Who cared about a trap door when they're about to be eaten by a huge three headed dog.

"It means that it was guarding something but what could possibly be so important to have such a guard?" Hermione said to Harry while ignoring Ron's sarcastic remark.

"I don't know Hermione but the fact that a Cerberus is guarding it tells me that maybe we aren't supposed to know. We'll just keep our eyes and ears open." Harry said before yawing. After that the three of them went to bed tired from all the running and the excitement.

A week later Harry was having breakfast when suddenly the owl post arrived, hardly even looking up from the big number of owls he just continued eating his piece of toast. He saw that one of his roommates, Dean had received the paper and asked if he could have a look. After reading through some articles he noticed one about how Gringots had been robbed during the summer but the news had only leaked out now several months later. He remembered some of the talk he had with Hagrid when he was in Diagon Alley after they had finished shopping. According to Hagrid it was close to impossible to steal from the goblins and only a insane person would try and do such a thing. He warned Harry that the goblins wouldn't hesitate to kill the one stupid enough to try and rob them. The article went on that although the goblins admitted that one of their high security vaults had been broken into, nothing had been stolen as the vault had been emptied earlier on. Harry looked at the date and saw that it was the same day as when he was in Diagon Alley for the first time. He then recalled that Hagrid said that he had just finished a top secret mission for Prof. Dumbledore and he started to wonder if those things were connected to each other. He voiced his thoughts to Hermione who said that most probably things were just a coincidence but it would never hurt to try

and find out more about it. Since Hagrid was involved they decided to pay the friendly giant (they guessed he was one) a visit that afternoon after classes hoping to find out more about that day. A few hours later the three of them (Ron wanted to come as well since he wanted to know about the dog) went to Hagrid's little cabin and knocked hoping he was home.

"Harry, you came to visit and you brought your friends too. Come in, come in don't stand out there in the cold." Hagrid said happy.

"Hey, Hagrid how are you doing?" Harry said politely, he figured he might as well ask how his friend was doing.

"I'm fine, no problems at all. How about you guy's, the lessons going ok?" Hagrid asked while serving his young visitors some tea.

Harry and his friends then started telling about all the things they had learned and seen, about their favorite subject and teacher and about the teacher they hated the most, that being Snape of course. Hagrid laughed loudly when Harry told how Ron and Neville had succeeded in making their cauldron explode in their first lesson although Ron didn't find it that amusing at first but in the end he joined in the laughter. After a few more stories Harry decided it was time to ask the questions they had come to ask so he started to tell how Malfoy had challenged him to a midnight duel and how he never showed up. He told him about how they had to run from Mrs. Norris and Filch and how they got stuck on the third floor.

"And then when we turned around there was this huge dog with three heads staring at us. Luckily we managed to get out of the room without getting hurt." Hermione finished that part of the story. By now Hagrid was very uncomfortable something all three of them noticed.

"So you found Fluffy huh?" Hagrid said stroking his long black beard.

"Fluffy? That thing has a name?" Ron yelled loudly. He couldn't believe someone would call such a monster 'Fluffy'.

“Of course he has a name, I gave it to him when he was just a little pup. Fluffy wouldn’t harm a fly except when he has something to protect.” Hagrid protested to Ron calling his cute Fluffy a thing.

“And just what is he protecting Hagrid?” Harry said seeing a chance to find out what was going on.

“Don’t you worry about that Harry, just something Prof. Dumbledore wants protected.” Hagrid said.

“Does it have something to do with the robbery at Gringots? I remember that you had a special mission the day we met in Diagon Alley.” Harry pressed on. He was getting close, he could feel it.

“Euh, never you mind Harry, like I said that’s between Prof. Dumbledore and Nicolas Flamel.” Hagrid said quickly before he realized what he had said.

“Nicolas Flamel? Who’s that?” Harry said looking at both Ron and Hermione. Both of them just shook their heads indicating that they didn’t have a clue who that person was.

“I should not have said that. I should not have said that. No more questions, now you guys best be off before you get punished for being outside.” Hagrid quickly said ensuring that he wouldn’t say any more things he shouldn’t say.

End Flashback

After that the three of them had started searching for information about Nicolas Flamel but so far they hadn’t found a thing and while Harry and Hermione kept looking, Ron had already given up saying that he would continue searching after the holidays. Finally the holidays had arrived and most of the kids were leaving Hogwarts and were busy packing their stuff so Harry was alone in the library reading a new book called ‘How to fight dirty and win’ and even though Harry wasn’t a cheater he could see the usefulness in some of the spells listed in the book. After all like the saying goes ‘All is fair in love and war’ and Harry was sure the bad guy weren’t going to follow the rules anyway. Harry had started writing down the spells he like in one of his

Muggle notebooks (which he used all the time instead of parchment except for assignments) and had already a small arsenal of spells that he started to learn and spells that he wanted to learn later on.

Hermione too had started learning some defense spells after the troll incident and she had to admit that some of them were very cool and useful. She had made excellent progress on her Occlumency and Harry told her that she was well on her way to complete her shields before the end of school year. She could hardly wait to hear the reason why Harry wanted to become as strong as possible, she knew him well enough by now to know that it was something serious and she was actually a little scared but she wouldn't leave Harry to deal with his problems alone. She would stand beside him supporting him every step of the way of that she was certain. Now however she would have to leave Harry alone for the holidays and although he assured her he would be fine she felt a little bad. She was already packed and was now looking for Harry so she could say goodbye and wish him a happy Christmas before she left with the train. She found him reading in the library sitting in their favorite corner.

"Hey, Harry I wanted to say goodbye and wish you a happy Christmas before I leave." She said quietly.

"Thanks Hermione, a happy Christmas to you and your parents too. Tell them thanks for all the letters and for their invitation." Harry said whispering knowing that his friend could hear him just fine.

"You're welcome Harry, though I would have enjoyed your company over the holidays. Guess I will have to wait for the summer holidays." She said before giving him a small hug. Harry gladly hugged her back already used to Hermione hugging him. Harry promised her that he would keep looking for Nicolas Flamel in the restricted section of the library since that was the only part they hadn't searched yet. He then accompanied Hermione to the gates so he could wave her goodbye as she left.

Over the next few days Harry and Ron (who had to stay as well since his parents were visiting his older brother Charlie) were enjoying the peace and calm in the castle. They had stayed inside the castle for the most part since it was very cold outside so they played some

chess (which consisted of Harry getting his ass handed to him by Ron), reading (mostly Harry) and having fun with Fred and George who were Ron's older twin brothers. Harry immediately liked both of them much to Ron's surprise and they started planning several pranks they could do to Snape once school started again. Harry had also finished writing down his new spells and had memorized quite a few of them, the only thing left to do was practicing them so he could perform them well enough.

On Christmas morning Ron just dragged Harry out of bed at the crack of dawn so they could open up their presents. This was the first time Harry received presents on Christmas so naturally he too was very excited. Harry started out with opening a present from Hermione's parents and was very pleased when he got several new notebooks and pens to use since he was starting to run out of them. Hermione had given him a new book called 'A spell creation guide for dummies' which he liked very much. He had found a very complicated book on spell creation in the library but it was so advanced that neither Harry or Hermione knew how to start reading the book. He knew spell creation could be very complicated or very easy depending on what you wanted the spell to do and so he hoped that one day he would know how to create his own spells. Hermione too found it very interesting and told Harry that they could work on this during the summer holidays. The next present was a candy box from Ron and he thanked his friend for the great present (he knew Ron's family wasn't rich like most pureblood families but that didn't matter at all) and surprisingly he had received a sweater made by Ron's mother as well. The last present however was what Harry liked the most, it was wrapped up in a thick brown paper with only a small note attached to it. He opened it and found a very big cloak, but when he put it on Ron just screamed and yelled that Harry had turned invisible. They quickly figured out that this was an invisibility cloak which were very rare and priceless, Harry looked for a name on the present but only found the small note with a sentence written on it. It read:

This was given to me by your father just before his death. It's time I returned it to its rightful owner. Use it well.

Harry couldn't be more happy, for the first time he had something that belong to his parents. For years he had dreamed of something that

would tie him with them and now he had a fantastic invisibility cloak that would surely help him in his adventures and in his quest to get stronger. Ron and Harry then spend a lovely day with the rest of the people who stayed at Hogwarts and they even had dinner at the teachers table with the professors. Harry asked several questions to Prof. McGonagall and Flitwick about Transfiguration and Charms, he even asked a few questions about his parents which they happily answered.

That night Harry thought that he might as well use his new invisibility cloak to check out the restricted section in the library for information on Nicolas Flamel. He quietly got dressed and left the room and donned his cloak. He exited the Gryffindor common room and slowly made his way over to the library. Luckily he encountered nobody along the way and reached the library without any trouble. He quickly went inside lighting the way with a handy 'lumos' spell and went to the restricted section. He started his search at the front shelves working his way to the end but after a hour of searching he hadn't found anything even remotely connected to Nicolas Flamel. Sighing he grabbed a new book and opened only to have it screaming very loudly like an alarm system, he quickly closed it and put it back before exiting the library and hiding a little farther. Not even two minutes later Filch arrived making Harry turn back to the common room so he wouldn't get caught. In his hurry however he seemed to have gotten lost and was now looking which way he needed to go when all of the sudden heard Filch and Snape talking and walking towards him. He quickly opened a door and hid inside making sure he didn't get caught by Snape.

Luckily they just passed the door and went on searching for who could have been out of bed. Harry turned around and looked inside the room for a moment. To his amazement he found that the room wasn't completely empty, in the middle of the room there stood a large mirror and it seemed to be calling Harry. He took off his cloak and went closer until he stood right in front of the mirror. At first he saw nothing but then shapes and forms started appearing and all of the sudden his reflection in the mirror was joined by several people. He gasped when he realized just who these people were, on his left side stood a beautiful woman with mesmerizing green eyes and fiery red hair staring lovingly at him and on his right stood a man with

glasses and unruly black hair looking at him with pride and love. It only took Harry a few seconds before he realized that these two people were his parents.

“Mom? Dad? Is that really you?” he asked with tears in his eyes. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing. For the first time he saw what his parents looked like.

They just smiled at him and put their hands on his reflection’s shoulder and continued to look at him. Harry had about a thousand questions that he wanted to ask but at that moment their smile told him everything he wanted to know. In their smile he saw love, pride, sadness and many more emotions. Harry stared at the mirror for a long time before he looked away with tears in his eyes. He knew that something was wrong with this mirror, it wasn’t natural since his parents had long been dead. He was happy that he now had a visual image of them but staying any longer would only make the goodbye harder.

“I’m sorry mom, dad but I can’t stay. I will make you proud of me and I will see you again when I die. Please continue to look after me from above. I love you both very much and I miss you.” Harry said with teary eyes. His parents smiled and he turned around leaving the room. He made his way back to the common room without any problems and went to bed emotionally drained.

The rest of the Christmas holidays went very quick and Harry was waiting to tell Hermione about the cloak and the mirror. Although he hadn’t made any progress on finding out who Nicolas Flamel was he was sure she would be very excited to hear about his adventures. He passed the days reading and planning for the summer. He had already some big things planned, the summer would prove to be very exciting if he succeeded in his plans.

Finally the holidays were over and Harry and Hermione were chatting at the table during the dinner, Harry hadn’t told her anything yet about the cloak and mirror since he didn’t want everyone to know about that so they talked about the presents they received and the normal topics that came up in a conversation. After Dumbledore dismissed them Harry pulled Hermione apart and went inside a empty classroom. He

then started to tell her everything and Hermione was very interested in the cloak so she made Harry promise to show it to her later on. Harry nodded and together they went back to the common room before they got missed. Hermione was a bit disappointed that even the restricted section had no information on Nicolas Flamel but they wouldn't give up, they would just have to look harder.

Well, this marks the end of this chapter. More to come next week on Sunday the 29th so see you guys then.

Thanks for reading.

Chapter 6: Confrontations

Things went very well for the next two months and Harry and Hermione were still top of the class in almost all their classes. Prof. McGonagall was very impressed with both of them and had said so several times making both of them blush from the praise. Prof. Flitwick too was very pleased with their work and had awarded them points several times for a well performed Charm or assignment. The only professor who didn't award them points or was impressed was Snape, he just treated them like every other non Slytherin meaning he docked points for no reason at all and called their potions mediocre and hardly worth the 'Acceptable' grade they received. This was something that made both of them very mad and they had even complained to their head of house. After that Snape had started to grade their potions more fairly if only just so he wouldn't get in trouble with Prof. McGonagall.

Hermione had made excellent progress on her Occlumency and was now almost finished building her second shield that would guard the more important memories and thoughts from intruders. Harry was confident that she would succeed in building all her shield before the end of the year. This meant of course that he would have to tell everything about the letter to Hermione but he didn't care, if he had to tell it to anyone he would have chosen Hermione anyway. Besides he could use her help in several areas and he knew he could trust her not to betray him.

They still hadn't found anything on Nicolas Flamel and they were close to giving up. No matter where they looked or searched they didn't find anything on the man, it seemed like he didn't exist or something. Maybe Hagrid had misled them by telling them just a name but somehow Harry thought that was unlikely since Hagrid didn't seem like the type of person to do such a thing. Nevertheless, they started to lose hope on finding anything on the man. Ron had long given up and he was kind of mad at them for always being the best in class and Harry had told him that all he had to do was study a little harder and he would be better too. Off course Ron didn't acknowledge Harry advice and just scowled at them and went on doing nothing. Harry and Hermione didn't let it bother them, if people were jealous all they had to do was study harder and less goofing off.

It was now nearing mid April and the weather was getting better and better by the day much to Harry's delight since he hated winter. He preferred the warm weather that came with spring and summer even if that meant that he had more chores at the Dursley's. On one day in April Harry and Hermione were on their way to the library when they encountered Hagrid carrying a very large book, they quickly went up to him and said hello. Hagrid wished them a good day as well before he hurried back to his cabin.

"Did you see the book? That was a book on how to raise a dragon." Hermione whispered in Harry's ear.

"Are you sure? Why would he need a book like that?" Harry whispered back.

"I don't know but it can't be good." Hermione said a little louder.

"Should we pay him a visit? I mean, we wouldn't be spying or anything just going for a visit." Harry said looking innocently.

Hermione smiled at Harry's face and nodded so they left the library much earlier than always and made their way over to Hagrid's cabin. After knocking on his door they heard a lot of noise and even some swearing that made Hermione's face bright red. After a minute or so Hagrid opened the door.

"Harry, Hermione what a surprise. Something wrong?" He said nervously before asking them in.

"Hey Hagrid, just passing by, how've been so far." Harry said while he went inside. First thing he noticed was that it was incredibly hot inside so he quickly took off his cloak and saw Hermione do the same thing. He looked around and saw a fire burning with a huge pot hanging above the fire. Inside the pot was a big egg, so big that it was twice the size of basketball. Hagrid just sighed and told them to sit down so he could explain.

"Alright you two, suppose I can't keep anything a secret with the two of you." Hagrid said chuckling.

“Hagrid, what kind of egg is that?” Hermione asked.

“That my dear Hermione is a dragon egg. A real dragon egg, I won it in the pub a few days ago, so now I’m trying to make it hatch and then I finally have a dragon. You see, I always wanted one.” Hagrid said happy. Ever since he was a small boy (well, young boy he was never small) he had dreamed of having a dragon for a pet.

“But Hagrid, that’s illegal. If you get caught you would be in big trouble.” Harry said worried.

“And it’s way too dangerous to keep a dragon as a pet. They aren’t meant to be pets, it could hurt you or one of the students.” Hermione added. She couldn’t believe Hagrid would be so irresponsible.

“Nonsense, dragons are just misunderstood besides I will train and teach it well so that it will behave.” Hagrid said confident that he could handle one little dragon just fine.

Harry and Hermione seeing that they wouldn’t be able to convince Hagrid asked that he would call them when the egg was about to hatch. After all, how many time in your life can you see a newborn dragon. Hagrid agreed and would send them a message so that they could be there. After having some tea and talking a little bit they went back to the castle still not believing that Hagrid wanted a dragon for a pet.

A week later Hagrid send them a message that the egg was close to hatching so they went to his cabin eager to see a baby dragon. Luckily it was Saturday so they didn’t have any classes today. Once they arrived Hagrid ushered them in saying that the egg had already started cracking. For the next 40 minutes they stared at the egg waiting for the dragon to break free. Finally after almost an hour of patiently waiting the egg cracked completely revealing a lizard like creature. It had a long head with horns and a very long tail, the tine claws seemed razor-sharp and the teeth as well looked like they could do some serious damage. Hagrid however just picked it up and started cuddling it and playing with it. Harry and Hermione just smiled at the scene of a giant man playing with a dragon.

“So, what will you do now Hagrid?” Harry said while keeping an eye on the baby dragon.

“Well, first I’m going to make sure Norbert grows big and strong, and when he’s old enough I’m going to find him a mate.” He said while the dragon nipped at his fingers.

“Norbert? You’re naming him Norbert?” Hermione said hesitantly.

“Well, he needs a name doesn’t he? Norbert is as good as any name.” Hagrid shrugged.

Harry and Hermione shared a look and tried to convince Hagrid that keeping Norbert here wasn’t a good idea. Dumbledore would never allow the students to be in danger from a dragon. It took a few hours but finally Hagrid had agreed to inform Dumbledore and ask him for help. Harry suggested that he asked if Norbert could be placed in a reservation with other dragons so he wouldn’t be lonely and Hagrid seemed to like that idea. Hagrid asked them to look after Norbert while he went to see the headmaster. It proved to be a very challenging babysit for the both of them once Norbert figured out how to breath fire. Needless to say Dumbledore too didn’t think a dragon at Hogwarts would be a very good idea so he contacted one of Ron’s brothers called Charlie who worked as a dragonkeeper in Romania. Charlie would come pick Norbert up several days later which led to a very emotional Hagrid who had grown attached to the baby dragon over the past few days but he knew that Norbert would be happier in Romania alongside the other dragons.

One night Harry, Hermione and Ron were relaxing in the common room after a particularly hard day where they had double potions which meant twice the amount of Snape. Harry was reading some book on Muggle warfare, Ron was reading his Quidditch magazine and Hermione was finishing a assignment for Charms. Ron was eating some candy and offered a chocolate frog to Harry knowing that was his favorite which Harry happily accepted. After eating the frog he looked over at the card and saw that he had Dumbledore’s card, he started reading the information and suddenly he choked and

started coughing. Startled Hermione went over and helped Harry get over his coughing fit by hitting him on the back.

“Thanks Hermione, I needed that.” Harry said after catching his breath.

“No problem, what happened?” she said.

“I just found our guy.” Harry whispered so only she and Ron could hear him.

“What? How and where did you find him.” Hermione asked quickly. They had been looking for months without success and now Harry had found him?

Harry just showed them the card and the information that was written on it. Without saying a word Hermione stood up and raced upstairs to her room. A few moments later she came back with a big book saying that she had borrowed it earlier that day as a final attempt to look for Nicolas Flamel but that she didn't have the time yet to look through it. She opened the book and quickly looked inside finding several pages on the man describing how he had been the only one to succeed in creating the philosopher stone.

“What's a philosopher stone?” Ron asked.

“Don't you ever read Ron? Never mind, don't answer that. The philosopher stone is a very special stone that can transform any metal into gold and it can provide the owner with eternal life. See, the book says that the Flamel's have celebrated their six hundred and something birthday.” Hermione said.

“Wow, any metal into gold. I wouldn't mind having that stone.” Ron said dreamily. He could already imagine the things he would buy if he had the stone.

“Yeah, you and somebody else.” Harry said.

“But who would be strong enough to be able to break in into Gringots and foolish enough to face Dumbledore?” Hermione asked though there was already someone in her mind that fitted those descriptions.

“Voldemort.” Harry just said making Ron shiver and letting out a quiet yell.

“Bloody hell, Harry don’t say that name.” Ron pleaded but Harry just ignored him.

Harry was feeling slightly ill, it would be very bad if Voldemort got his hands on the philosopher stone. He knew he wasn’t ready to face a healthy and strong Voldemort, he needed to get stronger and more experienced before even having a chance to defeat him. Hermione just hold his hand and told him that as long Dumbledore was here everything was safe. Voldemort wouldn’t risk facing Dumbledore in such a weak state since it would only get him killed. Harry knew she was right and relaxed a bit before thanking her for her support. Still, the stone was in danger and as soon as Dumbledore left Hogwarts then Voldemort would make his move. He would have to face him he realized, he couldn’t let him have the stone, if he did then they would be doomed. Harry and Hermione decided to keep an eye out for Dumbledore and if they saw that he was missing that would mean it was time to fight.

So far the next few weeks they concentrated on preparing for the end of year exams that were coming up and studying for the fight (even if they hoped that it wouldn’t happen), Ron had almost fainted after hearing the name Voldemort so many times but promised that he would help them in their fight if he could. While they weren’t working for school or exams Harry was helping Hermione with her Occlumency shields who were practically done. Harry was very proud of his friend and told her that she had beaten him by over six months, naturally she blushed and said that Harry had been a very good teacher. She still would have to strengthen them by practicing but that would happen naturally. Harry promised her that he would tell her everything after the exams not wanting to have something that might distract them from studying.

Finally it happened, two weeks before the exams Harry and Hermione noticed that the headmaster wasn't present at lunch and they immediately went to see Prof. McGonagall. She told them that Prof. Dumbledore had been called to London for a very important meeting and that he would be back the next day. They quickly searched for Ron and told him that tonight would be the night Voldemort would try to steal the stone, Ron gulped but said he would be there to help them. The rest of the day the three of them were very nervous and slightly scared too. This was a very dangerous situation but they knew that they didn't have a choice if they wanted to prevent Voldemort from getting the stone. Around midnight the three of them gathered in the common room and crept outside making their way to the third floor. They slowly opened the door so they would wake up Fluffy but it seemed that someone had already taken care of him. Fluffy was in a deep sleep and a harp was playing music, they opened the trapdoor and jumped only to land on a very soft place.

"Wow, that wasn't so bad was it?" Ron said before a large tendril wrapped itself around his waist. Before he could even say something Harry and Hermione had figured out what was going on.

"It's Devil's Snare!" Harry shouted. He then quickly grabbed his wand before the plant restricted to much of his movements. He then yelled out 'Lumos Maximus' and a blinding light appeared making the plant move away from him and setting him free. He fell a little lower on the hard stone floor. Not even two seconds later he was joined by Hermione but Ron seemed to be having trouble since the plant had a firm grip on him. Both Harry and Hermione quickly stood right beneath him and reused the same spell again freeing Ron as well.

"Thanks guys, that plant was trying to suffocate me." Ron said trying to catch his breath.

"No problem Ron, lets continue." Harry said determined to prevent Voldemort from getting the stone. Hermione and Ron nodded and they continued onwards. After walking for about two minutes they came into a very spacious room which had dozens of bird like things flying around. They ran to the door on the other side only to find it closed and not even an 'Alohamora' worked making Hermione frown. It seemed that they would have to search for the right key but they

couldn't seem to find it until Harry noticed that the things that were flying around the room were key's so they only had to find the right one and catch it. Harry grabbed a broom that he found lying around and quickly went up into the air looking for the key that would fit into the door, thanks to Ron and Hermione's description he had found the key fairly quick but catching it was not that easy. After a very exciting chase Harry finally caught the key and quickly descended to open the door.

"Wow, Harry that was great. You would be a great seeker if you played Quidditch, maybe you should try out next year?" Ron said amazed.

"No thanks, I like flying but I'm not for sports." Harry just said. He liked flying but to do it in competition or a match would destroy the calming feeling he had when he flew.

The three of them just walked until they found a large chessboard with life sized chess pieces that wouldn't let them through. Ron quickly deduced that they would have to play a game of chess and only if they won would they be allowed to pass. Luckily for them chess was something Ron was very good at, almost everybody in Gryffindor had lost against him so they had confidence that they would win this game. They decided that Ron would call the shots for this game and they positioned themselves to start the game.

The game was brutal, chess pieces were annihilated and destroyed but neither side seemed to get the upper hand for some time. After 10 minutes of playing Ron found out that the only way they could win was that he had to sacrifice the Knight (that being the piece he represented) so that Harry (the rook) could put the King into checkmate. At first Harry and Hermione refused and said that there had to be another way but Ron said it was the only way so they accepted his sacrifice. Ron made his move and his stone horse was smashed into pieces while Ron crashed onto the floor unconscious. Harry quickly made the last move and the opponent surrendered to him. He and Hermione quickly checked on Ron and found him just knocked out but okay, so they moved him out of the way and Harry made it a little more comfortable for him by placing his normal cloak

under his head. After that both of them continued their way to the stone and Voldemort.

In the next room they found a huge troll laying on the ground with a big bump on his head. The troll emitted a disgusting smell so they quickly passed it and into the next room. Finally able to breathe again they looked around inside the room and carefully made their way over to the other side. As soon as they passed the middle of the room a huge burst of flames appeared behind and in front of them effectively trapping them. Having no choice they continued and saw a small desk with several bottles of all shapes and form, they also found a piece of parchment with a riddle on it and from the riddle they guessed that one of the potions would allow them to carry on and one would allow them to turn back. After thinking about it they quickly found the right potions and after some arguments they decided that Hermione would turn back and alert the other teachers and Harry would go and try to stall Voldemort.

“Be careful Harry, I know you’re strong but you’re no match for him.” Hermione said worried for her best friend.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be fine. I promise that I would tell you everything you want to know later on. Now, go get help.” Harry said smiling trying to reassure his friend even though he was shaking too.

Hermione nodded and gave Harry one last hug before drinking the potion and stepped through the flames without getting hurt. Harry did the same and stepped through the flames ready to face the man that killed his parent and did so many wrongs to so many people. He would be damned if he let a monster like that get the Philosopher Stone. He marched on and came into a open space, he looked around and saw a man standing in front of a mirror that he recognized from the Christmas holidays. He then noticed who the man was in front of the mirror.

“Prof. Quirrel, you’re the one who wants to steal the stone?” Harry said shocked that a teacher as cowardly as him would do such a bold thing.

“Ah Potter, I should have known that you would try and thwart my plan.” Quirrel said without stuttering surprising Harry. Quirrel always sounded weak and he stuttered almost all the time. Had he been fooling everybody with an act of weakness?

“Why are you doing this? Money or is it the eternal life thing that you want?” Harry said trying to stall the man. For so far he could see, Quirrel hadn’t gotten the stone yet so there was still time to stop him.

“Please, money and eternal life are of no meaning to me. I only want to please my master.” Quirrel laughed.

“Your master? You mean Voldemort don’t you?” Harry said not believing someone would actually want to give that monster eternal life.

“Silence! How dare you say my masters name, you filthy mongrel.” Quirrel spat.

“You don’t have to do this, Dumbledore can protect you from him.” Harry said the first thing that came up.

“Dumbledore? He’s nothing compared to my master and when he’s back Dumbledore will get what he deserves for standing in my masters way all this time.” Quirrel snorted at the thought of Dumbledore. He then turned around and continued looking at the mirror trying to find out how this blasted thing worked.

“Use the boy, the boy knows, use the boy.” A very sinister voice said. The voice send cold chills across Harry’s back and he instantly knew that voice meant trouble.

Quirrel just turned around and ordered Harry to come closer. Harry, who was still trying to stall for time, just stepped forward and stood in front of the mirror. When he looked at his reflection he saw that it winked at him and then he put a red stone in his pocket. The real Harry felt a weight fall into his right pocket but made no sign of it trying to keep Quirrel out of the loop. When he was asked what he saw, Harry just fabricated a lie hoping Quirrel wouldn’t notice and for

a moment it seemed Harry got away with it but the creepy voice spoke again just when he tried to back away.

“He lies, let me speak to him!” the voice said.

“Master, you’re not strong enough yet, you shouldn’t...” Quirrel argued.

“Silence, I’m strong enough for this now let me speak to him!” the voice said and what happened next was something that Harry had never seen or wanted to see. Quirrel turned his back on Harry and started to unwrap his turban revealing a second face on the back of his head. The sight just disgusted Harry and he had to try very hard not to throw up.

“Harry Potter, we meet again. Look what I have become, a mere shadow of my former self forced to prey on others in order to survive. How could a child like yourself defeat the strongest wizard alive?” Voldemort said with venom in his voice.

Harry just stayed silent staring at the shape of Voldemort’s head, not wanting to say anything to the murderer of his parents.

“Make no mistake Potter, I will find a way to come back and when I do, I’ll finish what I started all those years ago. Mark my words.” Voldemort said.

“You can try but I won’t go down without a fight I can promise you that. I defeated you once and I can do it again.” Harry bravely said.

Quirrel unable to withstand the anger and rage Voldemort was feeling towards Harry just lunged at him trying to somehow hit him in the face, Harry however had trained for about three years now at martial arts, and although he wasn’t a master it would be enough to fight an enraged wizard who had never used Muggle fighting in his life. Quirrel just waved his arm around in the hope his fist would connect with Harry but to his surprise Harry just ducked under it and hit him square in the chin with a well aimed punch. Quirrel staggered backwards not understanding what was going on and Harry took advantage of it by kneeing him in the crotch (all is fair in a fight) and

elbowing him on the nose effectively breaking it. Quirrel just shouted in pain and tried to hit Harry by swinging his arms around like crazy. Harry grabbed one of Quirrel's arms and to his surprise Quirrel started screaming in pain and in front of his own eyes he saw his arm turn to dust shocking both Harry and Quirrel.

"Argh, what is this magic? Master help me!" Quirrel wailed and screamed in pain.

"You moron, use magic." Voldemort commanded.

Harry wasn't about to let Quirrel curse him if he could help it so he sprinted forwards and before Quirrel could utter a curse he kicked the wand out of Quirrel's remaining hand. He then grabbed Quirrel's hand and it too just crumbled into to dust. Quirrel then made a desperate move and head butted Harry by coincidence causing Harry to see stars and drop to his knees. Quirrel seeing a chance just ran into Harry trying to overwhelm him and started to choke him with the remaining piece of his arm. Harry who started to feel lightheaded just put both of his hands on Quirrel's head and watched how it crumbled to dust killing him.

Harry was exhausted and could hardly stand straight, but he slowly turned around making his way to the exit not seeing that Voldemort's spirit rose from Quirrel's remains. All of the sudden Harry felt something behind him only to have Voldemort's spirit pass through him knocking him into the wall. The last thing Harry heard was somebody yelling his name before the darkness claimed him.

Chapter 7: Secrets revealed

Harry woke up and when he opened his eyes he looked at the white ceiling of the infirmary and sighed. He wondered how long he had been unconscious. The last thing he could remember was someone calling his name and then nothing. He look around and saw Hermione sitting on his right side busy reading a book. He smiled happy to see that his friend was okay though he wondered if she had been here all this time.

“Hey Hermione.” He softly said. His throat was dry so speaking was a bit difficult and the headache he had wasn’t helping.

“Harry, you’re awake! Oh my god, I’m so glad that you’re alright. Wait right there I’ll go get Madame Pomfrey.” Hermione said jumping right up after she heard Harry’s voice. She ran straight out and into the small office next to the room. Not two seconds later she was back accompanied by the friendly healer.

“Well, welcome back Mr. Potter. You had us worried there for a moment.” She said while doing a scan of his vitals. She nodded when everything seemed to be in order.

“I’m sorry for worrying you Madame Pomfrey.” Harry managed to say.

“Don’t apologize to me young man, apologize to Miss Granger here, she hasn’t left your side for more than few hours.” She said smiling while handing him a glass of water.

Harry turned to Hermione and thanked her for staying with him and taking care of him. Hermione blushed and said it was only natural since they were best friends after all. Harry nodded and asked Madame Pomfrey if she had anything for his headache. She nodded and handed him a vial with a potion saying that this would help. Harry just gulped it down and true enough his headache was getting better.

“Harry what happened after I left?” Hermione asked curiously.

"That is something I would like to know as well Harry." Said a voice from behind Hermione. She spun around and saw the headmaster smiling at them.

Harry nodded and started telling what had happened after Hermione had left. Hermione seemed terrified when he told the part of Voldemort's head appearing and how he defeated Quirrel but Dumbledore just listened and never interrupted Harry.

"After that I turned around hearing some noise and I saw Voldemort's spirit raising and slamming right in to me, throwing me against the wall." Harry finished.

"Remarkable, never in my life have I heard such an amazing story. Harry, you have done the Wizarding world a great favor by preventing Voldemort to get the stone. Well done, my boy well done indeed." Dumbledore said while stroking his beard.

"I didn't do it alone Sir, If Hermione and Ron hadn't helped I wouldn't have succeeded." Harry said.

"Yes, I quite understand. The three of you will receive a special award for services done to the school, I'll make sure of that." Dumbledore said while his eyes were twinkling like firework.

"Sir, I have a few questions." Harry said while trying to sit up. Hermione helped him a little and sat next to him.

"Yes, I suspected you would have some questions Harry, but unfortunately there are some questions I can't answer. If you can accept that, I will gladly answer any other question you might have." Dumbledore said solemnly.

"Voldemort came after me for a reason didn't he? I would like to know why." Harry asked.

"I'm sorry Harry but that's the one question I can't answer yet. You're still so young, enjoy it while it last, there will come a time when I'll tell why, but not yet. I'm sorry Harry." Dumbledore said.

"So you won't tell me? Fine, I'll wait but don't think that I will sit back and relax while Voldemort is trying to get back. He told me Sir, that when he comes back he will finish the job he started all those years ago. If he wants me dead, then I will fight him to my best possibilities." Harry said while staring at Dumbledore.

"It pains me greatly Harry to hear a young boy as yourself talking like he's going to war. Harry, revenge and anger are never the answer." Dumbledore said trying to change Harry's way of thinking.

"Who said anything about revenge? I can assure you Professor that revenge is the last thing on my mind. What I want is to become strong, strong enough to protect the people I love and strong enough that when the time comes I can fight with Voldemort evenly." Harry retorted.

"I see. Very well Harry, I wish you the best on your quest to become strong. If you have any questions don't hesitate to come and see me." Dumbledore said surprised at Harry's answer. He bid them a good day and left the two kids alone.

Harry and Hermione just stayed a few minutes in silence trying to process what just happened. Both of them had understood that the headmaster knew something that was very important to Harry but he refused to tell him because he was too young. Harry had expected that Prof. Dumbledore would evade his question so he wasn't disappointed, he knew from his future self that it was his destiny to fight Voldemort so he had a pretty good idea what was going on. Either way he wouldn't let it bother him, he would deal with that when the time came. For now he had to get stronger and for that he needed time, planning and preparations but he would take care of that during the summer.

"Harry, do you think it was wise to say that to Prof. Dumbledore?" She asked quietly.

"Don't worry, Hermione I didn't expect him to answer that question. And about what I said, it's fine the only thing that he knows is that I will study and train hard so that's nothing special." Harry reassured her.

“Oh! Okay then. So when can we talk?” Hermione said anxious to know what Harry’s secret was.

Harry just chuckled and promised her that once the end of year exams were over they would sit down and he would tell her everything. She protested at first because the exams were only finished in three weeks from now and she really didn’t want to wait that long. Harry then told her that he didn’t want her to have any distractions from studying for the exams and she quickly conceded after that.

Three weeks later the exams were finally over and both Harry and Hermione were certain to have passed every course. The exams had been relatively easy compared to what they thought it would be, so they knew they did okay. Ron seemed to have a little more trouble but he was sure that he passed everything. Hermione then said that passing alone wasn’t enough if he wanted to be head boy in his seventh year. Ron just scowled at her saying that not everybody was a bookworm like she and Harry and just left to play some chess with Seamus. After dinner on their second last day at Hogwarts Harry pulled Hermione into a empty classroom and placed a few spells like a silencing charm around them, he wanted to be sure this conversation was private.

“Alright Hermione, like I promised you I’ll tell you everything you want to know on the condition that you won’t repeat it to anyone.” Harry said seriously.

“I promise Harry, I won’t tell anyone without your consent.” She said.

Harry nodded and began his story from how he got the letter till the day he went to King Cross and met her. To say Hermione was shocked was the understatement of the year, she was so shocked that she couldn’t say a word for several minutes and Harry was starting to get worried. Finally she just whistled and Harry smiled knowing that it was a lot to take in.

“Waw, that’s amazing. A letter from your future self. I can’t even begin to imagine how you must have felt.” Hermione said after she got over the shock.

“Yeah, so you see I have no choice but become strong. If I don’t then all the people I love or will love will be killed in the war. And make no mistake about it, when Voldemort gets back there will be war.” Harry said glad that she believed him.

“So you have been preparing for that war all this time?” She asked interested. She knew that she would help him, if it was Harry’s destiny to fight Voldemort than she considered it her destiny to stand beside him every step of the way.

“Like my future self instructed me I have made the necessary investments to acquire the funds yes. Other than that I haven’t done very much yet but after this summer that will change.” Harry said.

“What do you have in mind?” Hermione said in full planning mode. This was something she liked doing, she hated war and the horrible things that came with it but planning and preparing was something she was good at.

Harry just smiled and told her some of his idea’s that he wanted to do this summer but he told her that he didn’t have any concrete plans yet. For now he would return to his relatives house and start from there. Hermione nodded and said she would ask her parents if they could go to Diagon Alley and get some books so they could study over the summer. Harry told her that he would be going to Diagon Alley from time to time as well as James Evans so he would pick up a few things as well. Hermione then asked him if she could send letters and stuff over but Harry said that his uncle would have a fit if he received ‘freak’ stuff at home.

She then proposed that he rent a mailbox and that he let her know the address by phone, that way she could send him things without anyone knowing. Harry immediately liked that idea and asked for Hermione’s phone number. They agreed to send at least one letter a week so they could keep in touch and keep each other informed. Hermione also reminded him that he was invited to her house during

the summer and that she wouldn't take no for an answer which make Harry chuckle earning a glare from his best friend. After some more planning they went to the common room like nothing was out of the ordinary and joined some of the other Gryffindor's in playing exploding snap.

Finally the first year had come to an end and they were now reaching King Cross station again after a rather uneventful trip on the Hogwarts Express. Harry had slept about half the way of the trip while Hermione was reading a book and Ron was complaining that he was bored. Hermione had offered him one of her books only to have Ron look at her with an expression of disbelief saying that school was over and that he wouldn't open a book this summer before the last week just to make his summer assignments. Hermione just wondered why she even bothered trying to get Ron to study.

When they arrived at the platform Hermione spotted her parents and dragged Harry with her. Her mother could only laugh at seeing her daughter dragging poor Harry around and even her father shook his head at his daughter antics. Hermione quickly hugged both of them seeing that it had been a couple of months that she had seen them.

"Harry, look at you. You've grown into a very handsome young man. Come here and give me a hug." Emma said beckoning Harry over. She smiled at him when he shyly put his arms around her and gave her a big hug.

"It's good to see you again Mrs. Granger. And you too Mr. Granger." Harry said politely.

"Nice seeing you again Harry, Emma's right you've grown a bit since last time." Dan said causing Harry to become red in the face.

"So, when can we expect you to stay over at our place this summer. I know Hermione is very excited at the idea of spending her summer with you." Emma said making Hermione call out a little 'mum!'.

"Well, I will have to ask my uncle but I don't see why he wouldn't allow me to come over. It means less time seeing me so that will make him agree to anything." Harry said making both Dan and Emma

frown. They had heard a little about Harry's relatives from Hermione's letters so they had an idea how he was treated. Still there wasn't much that they could do about it except inviting him over during the summer.

"Just let us know when you can come and we'll come and pick you up. Okay?" Dan said placing his hand on Harry's shoulder. Harry nodded and said he would phone Hermione anyway later that week so maybe he would have an answer then. Just then Harry's uncle arrived at the station yelling at him to get in the car. Harry quickly said goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Granger and gave Hermione a quick hug and ran over to his uncle before the veins in his neck started popping up. After a very quiet ride home Harry just unloaded his stuff from the car and went inside. He was about to open the door of his cupboard when his uncle called him from the kitchen. He sighed and wondered what was going on now.

"Right, boy your aunt and I believe that you're getting too big for your cupboard so we'll allow you to use Dudley's second bedroom for the summer." Vernon said while glaring at Harry.

"Really? Thanks uncle Vernon." Harry said sarcastically. He wondered how Dudley had reacted when he heard that bit of information.

"Don't get cheeky with me boy, you'll do your chores and you will keep you freakishness away for my family. Is that clear?" Vernon spat at Harry.

Harry nodded saying that he would keep his 'freakishness' to himself as long as he was allowed 2 days with no chores every week and that he wouldn't do more chores than usual on the other days as well. Vernon agreed to Harry's demands and even allowed him to keep his trunk with him upstairs so he could do his homework. Harry smiled, he had gotten the better end of the deal after all, doing chores was something he could live with, he thought it builds character. And he even got two free days out of it which he would use to work on his plans and contact Hermione. He went upstairs and started to make plans for the coming months.

A few days later Harry disguised as James Evans had rented a mailbox for the summer and had called Hermione with a public phone. They had talked for a few minutes and Harry then gave the address of the mailbox he would be using. Hermione promised that she would send at least one letter a week depending on the things they had researched or found and Harry would do the same as well. After talking for a bit Harry said goodbye and made his way over to the bank to make an appointment with Sebastian, his financial advisor at the bank for further investments and a review of the last year. When he arrived at the bank he quickly went to the lady and asked for an appointment.

“Good afternoon, I’m hoping to make an appointment with Mr. Hackwell for next week please.” Harry politely said while smiling at the woman in front of him.

“Good afternoon Sir, Mr. Hackwell is free on Thursday afternoon. Would that be okay for you Mr.” the woman said after checking with her boss.

“Evans, James Evans. And Thursday afternoon is perfect.” Harry said calmly.

“Very well, Mr. Evans. See you on Thursday.” She said while marking the afternoon slot for Harry.

“Thank you very much.” Harry said before leaving.

Now that he had taken care of that he stopped by the bookstore a few streets away looking for something interesting to read. He wanted to find some books on strategy and planning. He knew that when Voldemort got back he would assemble his army again and thus Harry needed a way to fight them. He knew he couldn’t raise an army himself (or at least not right away) so he would have to use his head and other recourses he had. After looking for a bit in the history section he found a book that just screamed at him to buy it. It was ‘The art of War’ by the Chinese author called Sun Tsu, it was also one of the oldest books on military strategy. Harry quickly read through the book and knew that it would be very helpful to him in the

future and even if it didn't help him, it could prove to be a very good read so he put it into his basket.

The next book he found was called '33 strategies of War' by Robert Green and it covered five different sections with existing strategies filled with examples and comments. He quickly read through the prologue and nodded satisfied that this book would be an excellent help later on. He put it into his basket as well and continued looking for something he could buy but he didn't find anything worthwhile so he just paid for his books and went back to Privet Drive. He took off his necklace and became once again Harry Potter, opening the door he went straight for his room and put his books away in his trunk. He would have to wait to read them since it was almost time to start preparing dinner for his relatives. Harry sighed, he didn't mind chores (they kept him busy and were a time where he could think) but sometimes he wished they would prepare their own food once in a while.

Two days later he received a letter from Hermione saying that she would go to Diagon Alley the next week and that she would be able to look for some books that may help them get stronger. Off course she didn't tell her parents about Voldemort, she just told them that she wanted some new reading material for her second year. She also wrote that she already had completed most of her homework they had received so she could focus on other things. She also complained about the fact that they weren't allowed to do magic during the summer. Harry took a empty piece of paper and started writing his reply.

Dear Hermione,

I'm doing fine thank you for asking. The Dursley's are as friendly as ever but I'm being 'allowed' to use Dudley's second bedroom for the summer. Besides doing chores and dinner I don't see them all that much which is a good thing I suppose. I've made some arrangements with the bank for some financial business next week. I also found several very interesting books I'm sure you know 'The art of War' by Sun Tsu? I've started reading it and I found it to be very good lecture so far.

You're going to Diagon Alley next week? Good, maybe you can pick up some books on defensive and offensive spells we could learn. Nothing too advanced, otherwise your parents and the shopkeeper might be suspicious. I will try to get my hands on some advanced material when I get to Diagon Alley later this summer. I have finished most of our homework except potions and charms but I'll try to finish that in the coming week as well.

About not being allowed to do magic, I find it stupid as well. I don't understand what the big deal is since both your parents know about magic so as long as you keep it hidden from others there shouldn't be a problem. Maybe there's a good reason we haven't thought of yet?

I haven't talked to my uncle about coming over to your house later on in the summer but I will do so as soon as he's more used to having me around again.

Talk to you later

Your best friend Harry.

Harry nodded, this was enough for one letter in his opinion. He closed the envelope and wrote her address on the back before putting it aside so he could post it the next day. He went back to his Transfiguration homework and reread it a last time. Satisfied with the result he put it away in his trunk so he wouldn't lose it. Figuring he had done enough homework and reading for the day he went for a walk. Those walks were a big help in clearing his mind and coming up with new ideas. In his books he had read that preparations were of crucial importance in winning battles. So he needed to be prepared for the worst in his opinion.

He had read up on Voldemort and his Death Eaters during his time at Diagon Alley and Hogwarts. He had researched who had supported Voldemort and had noticed that most of the ancient Pureblood families had been on his side giving Voldemort access to a large amount of money and resources. He was smart enough to know that money equaled power in both the Muggle and Wizarding world but since he had already started on that he would have to start on something else.

The time of Voldemort's first reign had several severe consequences both for purebloods and non-purebloods. Voldemort used scare tactics and eliminated everyone that stood in his way, he crippled the economy since people were too afraid to leave their houses and since most of the necessary articles got so expensive that most normal households couldn't afford them anymore. Supply's like potion ingredients became rare and very pricy, people were stockpiling them just to be sure they had ways of surviving.

He thought that maybe he would need to start to collect materials and ingredients for future use but that would mean that he needed a place to place them. That thought appealed to him since that would mean he had a place of his own where he could escape from the Dursley's if necessary. That place could also become a shelter in need and a center of command for the battles against Voldemort. Harry laughed slightly, maybe he was getting ahead of himself and getting over his head. He shook his head saying that being prepared for something that might not happen was definitely better than being unprepared when the time for fighting came. He decided to gather some information about buying some property somewhere outside of London later that week. He remembered that he had an appointment with Sebastian in a few days so maybe he could help him with the necessary paperwork later on or recommending someone to him.

On Thursday afternoon Harry went to the bank to meet with Sebastian. He went inside and the lady behind the counter recognized him immediately and showed him to Sebastian's office asking him if he wanted some tea or coffee. Harry thanked her saying that he was fine for now. She nodded and knocked on her boss's door before opening it announcing Harry.

"Ah Mr. Evans, please come in. Thank you Miranda." Sebastian said dismissing the woman.

"Just James is fine please. How are you, Mr. Hackwell it has been quite some time since our last meeting." Harry said shaking the man's hand.

“Off course James and it’s Sebastian. I’ve been very well thank you.” Sebastian said before sitting down again and grabbing some papers.

“Glad to hear that. So why don’t we get started. Can you give me a small overview of the last year.” Harry said.

Sebastian nodded and started reviewing each investment Harry made and give him a paper with the numbers. Harry was very surprised at seeing the number at the bottom of the paper. Sebastian laughed saying that he too was surprised at the amount of money the investments had made, even some of the more critical companies. He even said that he too had invested some money thanks to Harry’s example and had made quite some money as well. After discussing the past year Harry made some new investments into some other companies that his future self had advised him.

“That should be the last of them, James. I’ll trust your judgment on those last two companies but seeing you were right the last time I foresee no problems whatsoever.” Sebastian said.

“Thank you Sebastian, now I have one final question. I’m looking to buy some property outside of London, would you be able to recommend me someone that might be of help to me?” Harry said leaning back in his chair.

“Hmm, I guess by property you don’t mean a normal house but something more of you standing?” Sebastian said. He knew some rich people and all of them had large villa’s and mansions.

“I’m not looking for something too extravagant but yes something with lots of space. Something secluded from the city as well if possible.” Harry nodded.

“I think I know the perfect person for the job James. She’s one of the best real-estate agents in the London area, her name is Josie McPherson.” Sebastian said turning to his computer. He clicked a few times and a second later a paper was handed to Harry with all her information.

“Thank you, Sebastian. I’m sure she would do a perfect job. If I need something I’ll let you know.” Harry said while standing up and shaking the man’s hand.

“Not a problem James, I look forward to see you again.” Sebastian said before opening the door of his office.

Harry left the bank feeling very cheerfully that he had booked some progress in his plans and decided that he would visit the real-estate agent later this week. He would need to think about what exactly it was that he wanted so that he didn’t make a fool out of himself. Seeing as it was still pretty early in the afternoon he took the bus to London so that if he hurried a bit he could do some shopping in Diagon Alley. Inwardly he sighed, this was way more taxing than he thought it would be, he had several things going on at the same time and it was getting hard not getting lost in all his thinking and planning. He needed something where he could write down his thoughts and plans he realized. That was the first thing he would buy when he got in Diagon Alley.

After a rather uneventful and boring bus ride he made his way over to the Leaky Cauldron and entered the shopping street that was Diagon Alley, he liked this place a lot ever since he had stayed at the hotel last year not far from here. He had visited Diagon Alley several times so he knew his way around by now. He went straight for the bookshop intent on finding a journal of some sort to write everything down, he knew there would have to be several protections on it to insure only he could read it. He opened the door and went straight for the counter where the shopkeeper was reading his newspaper.

“Good day Sir, I’m looking for a journal of some sort that has several protections on it.” Harry said politely.

“Ah, good day to you Sir. I think I might be able to help you with your problem.” The man said disappearing for a few moments. When he got back he carried three different notebooks with him.

“These are the three models I would recommend you Sir, the models are very much alike. They have never-ending number of pages, waterproof and fireproof. The only difference is the number of

protections on them. The first two have a simple password protection while the third one has a password, magic signature and blood protection as well.” The shopkeeper said displaying the notebooks.

Harry immediately liked the third one best, the contents would be very well protected and that was exactly what he needed. He didn't really care that the prize was four times that of the two others, all that mattered was that his secrets and plans were safe from prying eyes. He told the shopkeeper that he would take a pair of the third one (one for him and one for Hermione as a gift) and paid for it, he looked around a bit but didn't find anything interesting for the moment.

He then went to 'Flourish and Blotts' so he could have a quick look at the books hoping he would find something worthwhile, he proceeded to the defense section at the back of the shop and started looking. After a quick look he had found a book called 'veneficus ritus pro inceptor' which listed several small rituals that weren't considered dark. They were rituals that were light sided because they didn't need any sacrifice or payment to perform. Another book he found was called 'obscoena veneficus pro mages' which contained several offensive spells that he could learn. Both of the books seemed to be pretty old and forgotten so he could claim to be a collector if the shopkeeper asked him questions. The shopkeeper however just took the books and placed them into a small bag and handed them to Harry who paid for them and left. After leaving the Leaky Cauldron he took the bus back to Privet Drive and started writing down some of his plans into his journal.

Thanks for reading and let me know how I did. The next chapter will be online on Sunday 27th of July. See you then. Bye.

Chapter 8: Summer holidays at the Granger's

The month went quickly and before Harry knew it July had almost passed. Between doing the Dursley's chores, studying and planning for the future battles that he was sure would come Harry didn't have much time to spare. He and Hermione send several letters sometimes even three or four a week which made Harry very happy since that was the only way he could keep in contact with her. He remembered his promise to her and her parents that he would spend some time with them during the summer and he would be leaving the Dursley's that very day so he could celebrate his birthday with them instead of spending it alone. He smiled that he had succeeded in convincing his uncle to let him go although it didn't take much convincing in the first place.

Flashback

"Uncle Vernon?" Harry called his uncle who was currently reading his newspaper.

"What is it boy? Can't you see that I'm busy?" Vernon grumbled at Harry.

"I was wondering if you would give me permission to spend the rest of the holiday's with my friend Hermione and her parents?" Harry said politely.

"The rest of the summer you say? She's a freak like you isn't she?" Vernon said perking up at the idea of having the rest of the summer free of the freak.

"Hermione is not a freak, but yes she can do magic too." Harry said before he realized that he had used one of the forbidden words.

"What have I told you about saying that word? I won't have you spreading your unnaturalness in my house. Do you hear me boy?" Vernon thundered from his chair.

"I'm sorry Uncle Vernon, but can I go to her place? That way you won't have to see me again until next summer." Harry said hoping that this would calm his uncle.

"Fine, that way you're out of here. Now, leave me alone I'm reading my newspaper." Vernon said while waving his arms shooin Harry out of the room.

"Thanks Uncle Vernon." Harry said happy that he could spend the rest of the summer away from his relatives.

End Flashback

He had called Hermione that very same day and they agreed that her parents would pick him up the day before his birthday which was today. So that's why Harry was sitting on the sidewalk with his trunk next to him waiting for the Granger's to arrive. He had send Hedwig ahead knowing that she wouldn't like the trip in the car, she preferred to fly into the blue open air. Hermione adored Hedwig anyway so she didn't mind watching over her for a couple days and Harry was sure that Hedwig like Hermione as well. Harry had decided to wait outside so Hermione's parents wouldn't have to meet with his relatives more than necessary. He had seen how they had reacted when they saw his uncle at the train station.

After waiting for a half an hour he saw a light blue car approach number 4 and he figured that this were the Granger's since he didn't know what kind of car they had. The car stopped right next to him and he saw Mrs. Granger smiling at him before the passenger door opened and something tackled him to the ground. Opening his eyes he saw Hermione kneeling over him looking a bit embarrassed that she had caused them to fall over.

"Hello Hermione, I'm glad to see you too but there's no need to attack me like that." He chuckled making her even more red in the face.

"Hey, I'm just happy to see you, it has been almost a month that we saw each other." She said helping him stand up.

“Hello Harry, how are you doing?” Emma said before giving Harry a hug. She looked him over and found that he had grown a little bit since last time she saw him. She was glad to see that his relatives weren’t there otherwise she would be hard pressed to stay civil especially after hearing some of things Hermione told her.

“Hey Mrs. Granger I’m fine thank you. How are you and Mr. Granger?” Harry said after the hug. He liked Hermione’s mother very much, she was always friendly and cared about him a lot.

“We’re doing fine Harry. Are you ready to get out of here?” Dan said grabbing Harry’s trunk. Harry nodded enthusiastically before helping with putting his stuff in the car.

“Well then, get in the car and we’ll be out of here before you know it.” Emma said opening the door for Harry and Hermione who quickly got in.

They spend the trip talking about small things and had a great time with Hermione already planning to do some sightseeing with Harry when she heard that he hadn’t seen London’s numerous sights. Harry gladly accepted making it an official plan for the summer. He was sure that they would have a great time together and he thanked them again for allowing him to stay with them. Hermione said that he didn’t need to thank her since it was only normal since they were best friends. After that they talked about what they would like to see and do while they were together. When they arrived at Hermione’s house Harry wasn’t surprised to see a beautiful two storied house with a small garden in the front with a path from the road to the front door. After parking the car on the driveway Harry helped getting his trunk out of the car and followed the Granger’s inside.

The inside of the house was just as lively and warm as the Granger’s were, it was modern yet it felt more homely than Number 4 had ever felt like. It wasn’t freaky clean, cold or uninviting like the Dursley’s house was. Hermione grabbed his hand and pulled him along towards the living room where she motioned him to sit down in one of the very comfortable couches.

"Welcome Harry, I hope you like it?" Emma said after sitting down herself.

"Thank you Mrs. Granger, it's a very lovely home. I'm sure we'll have a great time together." Harry said while looking around a bit.

"Glad you like it. Now Hermione why don't you help Harry getting installed in the guestroom and then we'll order pizza or something for dinner." Emma said to the two youngsters.

Hermione nodded and pulled Harry with her into the hallway and then helped him getting his trunk upstairs to the guestroom. They had a great time unpacking his things and he had to pull her away from some of the books she had found in his trunk promising that they would talk later about those books. Hermione showed him around the house and showed him her room which he thought was typical Hermione when he saw the large amounts of books on the bookshelves. Other than that she had a big desk in the corner which was filled with notes and paper indicating she had been very busy over the last month. After going back down she showed him the rest of the house while Dan ordered pizza for everybody. During dinner Harry told a little bit about Hogwarts to Hermione's parents who were glad to hear the stories from a different point of view. When they finished dinner Harry helped cleaning the table saying that doing some chores is the least he can do in return and while Dan and Emma were busy watching TV Harry and Hermione went upstairs to talk a bit more private.

"Alright Harry let's hear it. What have you been up to?" Hermione said staring straight at Harry.

"Fine, guess there's no use telling that we should wait till tomorrow to discuss things right?" Harry sighed. Seeing Hermione narrow her eyes he figured it would be better for his health if he started telling what he had been doing or done in the past month. He told her that he made several new investments with the money he gathered and how he went to Diagon Alley and found a few very interesting books. He also told her that he had bought a fairly big property which he would use as a home later on.

"You bought a house? Where is it? And why do you need a house?" Hermione said not believing what she heard.

"It's actually more like a mansion and it's just outside London, it's secluded enough and it will make a very nice home when they're done with the restorations." Harry said while trying not to laugh at his best friend.

"Tell me all about it. Now!" Hermione ordered but Harry could hear that she wasn't mad or something, just curious that's all.

"Alright, last year while I was in Diagon Alley and I guess while at Hogwarts too, I did some research on how Voldemort impacted the Wizarding world and who supported him. I found that most of the prominent Pureblood families were on his side, especially families like the Malfoy's, the Parkinson's, Goyle's and Crabbe's to name a few. Those families provided him with a lot of funds which gave him a lot of power and influence off course." Harry started his explanation.

"Right, I understand but what does this has to do with you buying a mansion?" Hermione said confused.

"A second, I'm getting there, during his reign Voldemort didn't just kill people, he also made a huge impact on the economy and society. Because everyone was so afraid of him and his Death Eaters, people just stayed inside hardly going to the shops and so crippling the economy as well. People also started to stockpile important things like food, potion ingredients, medical supplies and stuff like that. Can you guess what happened next?" He asked her.

"Sure, things that normally were very usual became rare causing the prizes to go up making the poorer families unable to buy the things they so desperately needed." Hermione said softly.

"Correct, while I was thinking about that I figured that maybe we should start gathering supplies while everything is still peaceful. Not only the prizes would be normal but also there's no shortage of anything. If we started buying potion ingredients now we wouldn't have to worry about it later on, we would be able to brew whatever

we needed. Same goes for food and medical supplies and things like that. Off course this leads to a problem as well.” Harry continued.

“Ah, I understand now. We would need a place to store all these things.” Hermione said understanding Harry’s reasoning. It made sense too, preparing and planning for the worst so you won’t be caught off guard.

“That’s right, so I asked the guy who handles my investments if he didn’t know someone who might be able to help me. He gave me a name and address and the rest went very smooth from there.” Harry said remembering his meetings with Mrs. McPherson.

Flashback

Two days after meeting with Sebastian, he had called the number on the paper and made a appointment for a consultation. Luckily for him she had been able to meet quite early and so Harry was now walking towards Mrs. McPherson’s building for his appointment. He found the right building quite easily and the clerk politely showed him where he had to go. He gave his name to the secretary and was immediately allowed entrance to her office.

“Ah you must be Mr. Evans. Please come in and take a seat. I’m Josie McPherson, nice to meet you.” The woman said warmly. She was around her mid forties but still looked very young for her age. She had long brown hair which went just under her shoulders. She was dressed in very stylish but feminine clothes showing that she was a businesswomen through and through.

“Mrs. McPherson, the pleasure is mine I assure you. And please it’s James, being called Mr. Evans makes me feel so old.” Harry joked earning a smile from the woman.

“Of course James but only if you call me Josie! We will be seeing each other several times over the next few weeks.” She said while offering Harry something to drink which Harry gladly accepted.

“Very well Josie, I’m looking forward to do business with you.” Harry said while taking a sip of his drink.

“Likewise James, I’m sure I’ll be able to help you with everything you want. So if Sebastian send you here you must already know that I specialize in buying and selling properties for the rich. Hopefully, that’s not problem?” She said while leaning back in her chair.

“Not to worry Josie, my budget is more than enough for one property. I’m sure of that.” Harry said smiling.

After that Josie started asking what kind of house he had in mind, she wanted to know what he was looking for so they wouldn’t waste time by looking at something he wouldn’t want anyway. Harry told her that he was looking for a place that was secluded from the rest, had lots of space and rooms. Josie started by selecting the properties that met those specifications. She quickly found several house’s that might interest her client. Unfortunately none of the properties seemed to be what Harry wanted, as a last attempt Josie showed him some picture of a place that was everything he asked for but the house and the other buildings were in bad shape since no one had lived there for a very long time. It would take some serious restoration, funds and hard work to get everything in order. Harry however liked the place immediately and asked her to go into detail some more.

“Josie, this place is perfect and if you can help me with my next problem than you can consider the deal done. You see, I’m unavailable and unreachable starting from the end of the month until summer holidays next year so I won’t be able to supervise or coordinate the restorations. But say that I provided you with the necessary funds would you be able to take care of those things for me?” Harry asked knowing that since he returned to Hogwarts in September he wouldn’t be able to do all those things.

“Not a problem James, our company uses its own contractors and workers in case we need to do these kind of restorations. If you provide us with the money then we’ll get the job done by next year’s holidays.” She said taking a folder from her drawer.

“Wonderful, I will provide you with let’s say 250 000 pounds? Would that be enough to cover the costs?” Harry asked not having any clue how much it would cost.

"That would be more than sufficient James. The only thing you need to do is explain what you want done and how you want it done." Josie smiled. She would make some very nice profit with this sale she realized.

"Josie, let's be honest. I don't have a clue what I'm talking about here. I'll leave everything in your capable hands if that's alright with you? As long as it's not too flashy and extravagant I'm okay with everything. I would like however that you make it into something modern and stylish but warm and homely at the same time. Other than that, the call is yours." Harry said hoping she would agree, he didn't have the faintest idea how to decorate a house.

"Are you sure James, I mean not a lot of people would take such a risk. I will do it if you are sure though." She said hesitantly.

"I'm sure Josie, just tell me what I have to do and then we can get started." Harry reassured her. After that they went over the necessary paperwork that came with buying and restoring a property.

End Flashback

"Harry, how did you pay for all that? I mean, I know you made some investments but this is crazy." Hermione said shocked at the amount of money Harry was spending on this.

"Relax, the investments I made gave me more than enough money to pay for all of this. In fact last year alone I made more than five times that amount of money, so there's nothing to worry about." Harry said.

"Wow, I guess that's okay then. So your house will be ready by the time we get back from our second year?" She said still not believing how much money Harry had acquired.

"Yep, that way we can start on that part of the plan. So how about you, what have you found except the things you told in your letters?" Harry asked.

"I'm glad you ask. I have found an amazing project for us. How would you like to become an animagus?" Hermione asked while grinning widely.

"An animagus? You mean like Prof. McGonagall?" Harry asked already liking the idea.

"Exactly like that. I found a book in Diagon Alley that can help us. I actually found it in a box of old books that they were selling. I got it really cheap since they now have other methods that allow people to complete the process much quicker." She said while she grabbed a book from her shelf.

"Quicker? How? What's the difference between the method in your book and the new one?" Harry asked interested.

"The results are the same but the new method uses a potion that allows you to transform for the first time. That way you know what animal you are which makes it much easier afterwards. The method in this book uses meditation to find your animal so it takes a lot longer to achieve the transformation." Hermione explained. "The reason why I want to use this method is that the potion is incredible difficult to make, it's so difficult that only a potion master can brew it. Also the ingredients are restricted by the ministry which would make them suspicious if we bought them." She finished her explanation.

"Good thinking, no need to draw attention to ourselves and we do have time enough to use the older method anyway." Harry nodded.

"The best thing is that we can start on it right away. There's no casting of spells or magic involved so we can do it at home as well. The book says that we first have to learn how to meditate correctly which shouldn't be a problem for us since we can do Occlumency. While we meditate we need to think about ourselves and our character, once we did that we should have an idea what animal we can become. After that it's a case of practicing the transformations." Hermione said.

“Cool, I can’t wait to find out what kind of animal I am. Hopefully something cool and strong like a lion or something like that.” Harry joked making Hermione smile.

After talking a bit more they saw that it was getting late so they decided to get some sleep so that they would be rested for tomorrow. Harry bid Hermione and her parents a good night and went to bed falling asleep while thinking about what kind of animal he would like to be and how much his life had changed for the better since he became friends with Hermione. If someone had told him that he would have such a wonderful friend a few years ago he wouldn’t believe it but now he knew better. He once again promised to do everything in his power to protect her and keep her safe and then fell asleep tired from the exciting day.

Harry woke up the next morning after a very good night of sleep, the bed in the guestroom was several times better than the bed he had at the Dursley’s but that wasn’t surprising. He took some fresh clothes and took a quick shower before heading downstairs. The house was quiet and he wondered if he was the first to wake up, this somehow seemed impossible since it was already close to noon. He entered the living room and went to the kitchen seeing if anybody was around. When he entered the kitchen three people jumped up from behind the counter and yelled out ‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY’ startling him before he was hugged by Hermione and Emma both wishing him a very happy birthday. Dan too came over and wished him many years to come while giving him a firm handshake. Harry was shocked at what had happened, for the first time in his life people wished him a happy birthday and he couldn’t be more happier.

“T-Thank you very much. I can’t believe you did this for me. Thank you.” Harry managed to say after a few moments.

“You’re very welcome Harry, now come here so we can get on to the next part of your surprise.” Emma said smiling at Harry. He quickly obeyed and stood next to Hermione who had put a very tasty looking birthday cake on the table. On the cake stood ‘Happy Birthday Harry’ written and in the middle stood a small candle waiting to be blown out.

“Okay Harry, while you blow out the candle you have to make a wish but you can’t tell anyone what it is okay?” Hermione said to which Harry nodded before blowing the candle out.

‘My wish is that none of the people I love get taken away from me.’ Harry wished quietly.

Hermione and her parents gave a small applause before cutting the cake and giving each of them a piece of the cake which was delicious and they enjoyed it very much. After they were done with the cake Harry was led to the living room where he received a few presents from them. Hermione had given him a magical planner that she bought in Diagon Alley, it would allow him to keep track of his studies and homework she told him. He thanked her very much for such a wonderful present and from her parents he got received a large photo album saying that from now on they would make new memories and pictures together. He gave Hermione and Emma a big hug and shook Dan’s hand thanking them for the presents.

They spend the rest of the day together visiting London and Harry was mesmerized by all the thing he saw, for the first time in his life he realized just how much he had missed out in life. He vowed to always take time to enjoy the little things in life as well. Sure he may have to fight a Dark Lord in the near future but that wasn’t a reason not to enjoy himself until that time came, as long as he continued to prepare off course but with Hermione at his side he was sure that wouldn’t be a problem. After a wonderful day they came back home and Harry already had several pictures to add to his new album. While Mrs. and Mr. Granger were enjoying a relaxing evening with watching TV and reading a book, Harry and Hermione were upstairs planning and plotting for the coming year.

“Alright Harry, what else have you planned out? You can’t fool me you know?” Hermione accused Harry.

“I was going to tell you, honest!” Harry said while raising his hands in front of him like he surrendered to an enemy.

“Spill it then, knowing you it will be something either dangerous or illegal.” She said glaring at him. “And don’t try to give me that innocent look of yours.”

“Take all my fun away, why don’t you.” Harry sighed. “Alright, like I said I went to Diagon Alley two or three times and found several interesting things. Now before you blow a gasket, these are all perfectly legal.”

“Okay, I trust you Harry, you know that. Just show me what you found.” She said impatiently. ‘Damn him and his dramatics’ she thought.

“The first book I found was a book on rituals. It’s a fairly old book but every ritual inside is considered light magic even if some of them are purely for warrior and fighting purpose.” He said while showing her the book. “If you open the book on page 56 you’ll see a ritual that I would like to do, it’s a ritual that allows people to strengthen their bone structure meaning that bone will be much harder to break, I’m sure you can see the advantage of that.”

“Yeah, curses like the ‘bone breaking curse’ would be ineffective or at least the damage wouldn’t be so severe. What else?” she said nodding.

“The next one is on page 104, this one is tricky not because it’s dangerous or anything but because it’s a long time project. What the ritual does is that it creates a seal that makes it much harder to do magic, especially stronger spells. It puts a strain on your magic core so to speak, this forces you to use more magic than normally making it stronger over time. The problem with this ritual is that it take a long time for the results become visible, in fact it will only be visible when the seals disappears after two years.” Harry said.

“So you want to put a seal on our magic, forcing it to get stronger over a period of two years before its released again? Are you serious Harry? Think about how this would influence us at Hogwarts.” Hermione all but yelled.

“Calm down, I agree it’s a risk. Not only for Hogwarts but if Voldemort comes back before the two years are over we’re in trouble but think of the advantages.” Harry said. “Besides there’s the fact that you have to be 13 years old to perform the ritual so I would have to wait until next year. If we study and train enough this year we could become strong enough to not really be bothered by it. Magic is like a muscle Hermione, the more you train it, the stronger it becomes. We need every bit of help we can get, while at Hogwarts the most magic we use is magic that doesn’t take that much effort so we should be safe.”

“I understand what you’re getting at Harry but still? Let’s forget about this one for now okay? We can’t do it yet anyway, and I would prefer to do it at the same time as you, if we go through with it.” Hermione admitted. “What else did you find?”

“You’re right, we have the whole year to decide on it. Alright, next is page 76, a sleep reducing ritual, like the name says it allows people to reduce the necessary amount of sleep they need. After doing the ritual we’ll only need a minimum of four hours of sleep a night. Now this doesn’t mean we can’t sleep more only that four hours is enough.” Harry showed her the page.

“That’s pretty interesting. While people sleep we could study or practice and it could be useful later on.” She admitted. “but what I don’t understand is why doesn’t everybody use these rituals? I mean surely more people can see the use of them?”

“I wondered about that as well and I came up with a theory. You know how the magical world thinks about good and bad right? You’re either Light sided or Dark sided there’s no ‘in between’, so everything that’s not considered Light is classified as Dark. And Rituals are such a thing, yes there are a lot of rituals that are really Dark because they need human sacrifices and stuff like that but some of them are just plain Light sided. But since the Ministry of Magic considers rituals dark, every ritual is dark no exception.” Harry explained.

“Oh I see, just like because for example one werewolf does an evil thing their all considered evil.” Hermione said understanding what Harry meant.

“Exactly, the same with other Dark magic. A lot of magic was classified as Dark magic because Voldemort and his Death Eaters used it to destroy and kill.” Harry continued. “The problem with that is that while the bad guy’s used destructive and powerful magic, the aurors fought back with weaker spells making it really hard to gain the upper hand.”

“That’s why Voldemort and his Death Eaters were practically impossible to defeat, until you came along.” Hermione finished.

“Yeah, but I don’t want us to study the Dark Arts or anything but there are tons of other strong and powerful Light spells out there faulty categorized as Dark Arts. Those are the spells we should learn once we’re ready for them. Off course that will take a while since were only second years anyway.” Harry sighed.

“Harry, we have to start at the basics we can’t just start studying seventh year or Auror spells that’s impossible, let’s do it slow but good. Nothing good comes from rushing things.” Hermione said understanding Harry was eager to learn the stronger spells.

“Yeah, you’re right off course. Any way that’s what I found, what do you think?” Harry asked.

“We should definitely do the bone strengthening and sleep reducing ritual this year. We’ll see about the last ritual at the end of the year deal?” Hermione said still not comfortable with the last ritual.

“Deal.” Harry said happy his friend agreed to his idea’s so far.

“This is going to be a busy year with animagus training, rituals and all the other studying we’ll do. This is going to need some planning ahead otherwise we’ll lose ourselves.” Hermione said leaning against her bed.

Harry just stood up and went to his room before coming back with two journals in his hand. He then explained what they were and how they worked, needless to say Hermione was very happy when she heard that one of them was for her. Harry said that they would use them to keep track of what they were doing and with the safety features on

the journals nobody would be able to read them. He showed her his entries and things that he had written down like plans, ideas and suggestions. After talking for a while both of them went to bed getting some much needed sleep and relaxation.

Two weeks had passed since Harry had arrived at the Grangers and the summer holiday's were reaching to an end both unsurprisingly both Harry and Hermione couldn't wait for school to start. They had a blast over the past two weeks, while Hermione's parents worked they studied or just had fun, Hermione taught Harry how to swim, they went to the movies and just enjoyed the weather outside. Harry was having the best summer of his life and he told that the Grangers several times. It wasn't all fun and games though, a few days ago Harry and Hermione had a very peculiar visitor, a house elf called Dobby and he brought a message for Harry.

Flashback

Harry and Hermione were upstairs relaxing when all of the sudden a loud 'POP' was heard. Both of them looked at where the sound came from and saw a very weird creature standing there, it had long pointy ears, a long nose and big eyes. The creature was short, about half their size, wearing nothing but a filthy teabag and his hand with long fingers were wrapped in bandages. For a second all three of them stared at each other, none of them made a sound or moved.

"W-Who are you?" Harry managed to say softly.

"I is being Dobby, Harry Potter Sir. I is having message for the great Harry Potter Sir." Dobby squeaked in a high pitched voice.

"A message? Well, why don't you sit down and make yourself comfortable." Harry said hoping that would relax this 'Dobby' creature. Unfortunately, Dobby stared at Harry for a second and then just started crying and wailing that no one had ever asked a house elf to sit down with wizards before.

"A house elf? No offence Dobby but we never heard of house elf's before, could you explain a little for us?" Hermione asked gently not wanting to upset the poor guy even more.

Dobby calmed down enough and explained that a house elf like himself worked for a family (mostly purebloods) where he took care of the daily tasks like preparing dinner, cleaning and shopping. Hermione and Harry had a feeling that Dobby didn't serve the nicest of people judging by his clothes and his appearance but refrained from commenting about it.

"Harry Potter Sir, Dobby is having terrible news. Harry Potter Sir must not go to Hogwarts, bad things will happen. Very bad." Dobby said making both of the youngsters frown.

"What do you mean Dobby, what kind of things?" Harry pressed.

"Dobby cannot say, cannot betray family but must not return to Hogwarts. Great evil this year." Dobby said bouncing around the room before Harry grabbed him and sat him down again.

"I'm sorry Dobby but we must return to Hogwarts, we have to get stronger and learn more magic so that we're good enough to defeat Voldemort when he gets back." Hermione said making Harry nod in agreement.

"You is speaking name of evil lord, who is you being? You is not afraid?" Dobby said with big eyes looking at Hermione.

"My name is Hermione and no Dobby, we're not afraid to say his name. Can you tell us more about this danger?" She asked.

"No, no, no miss Grangey Dobby cannot say more, Dobby had to punish himself for coming here, can't say more." Dobby said looking around the room nervously.

"Okay Dobby, you don't have to say anything that you don't want to. But I'm sorry, we'll have to go to school we have to get stronger and even if something dangerous is happening at Hogwarts, I want to be there so I can help protect people." Harry said hoping the elf would understand.

“Harry Potter Sir isn’t being afraid? Could get hurt or die yet not afraid.” Dobby stared at Harry.

“I’m a little afraid Dobby, but I made a promise that I would protect my friends and a lot of my friends go to Hogwarts. Don’t worry Dobby we’ll be careful and thanks to you we know about it.” Harry said laying his hand on Dobby’s shoulder.

“Dobby is not liking it Sir, but I is understanding Harry Potter Sir is greatest wizard of all times. If Dobby can, then he’ll help with Harry Potter Sir.” Dobby said proudly.

“Thank you Dobby, that’s very nice of you.” Hermione said.

“Dobby must be going now, family might need Dobby, goodbye Harry Potter Sir, Miss Grangey.” And with that Dobby just disappeared. Harry and Hermione just looked at the place where Dobby used to sit before slumping down on the ground.

“Well, that’s just great news isn’t it. Safest place in Britain my foot.” Harry just deadpanned.

“Yeah, seems like it’s going to be a very exciting year again won’t it oh Harry Potter Sir, greatest wizard of all times.” Hermione joked.

“Funny, real funny Miss Grangey.” Harry answered cheekily before both of them exploded in laughter at Dobby’s way of addressing them.

End Flashback

That wasn’t the worst event of the summer though, the most terrifying moment was when they visited Diagon Alley two days ago so they could buy their school books. Hermione had been very excited to go ever since they got their booklist and Harry had found out that every book had been written by a certain Lockhart guy. According to Hermione he was an amazing wizard who had done incredible things over the past few years and he had written several books on his adventures and accomplishments.

They had run into Ron's family at Gringots and Harry met Ginny Weasley for the first time, although meeting her is saying a lot. He greeted her friendly only to receive a squeak and then she hid behind her mum with a bright red face. Harry wondered what he had done wrong but then he remembered that like so many girls she had been raised with stories about him and he groaned knowing that according to Ron she had a crush on him. He hoped that she would get over her crush in time since he had no need for a lovesick girl following him around all the time.

After meeting and introducing everyone they all went to inside 'Flourish and Blotts' where to Harry's horror and Hermione's delight Gilderoy Lockhart was having an 'meet and greet' with his fans. The shop was filled with witches young and old who were crazy about the man. To Harry it seemed that the man was anything but a powerful wizard judging from his manners and outfit, Lockhart wore high quality clothes, his hair perfectly in place and a smile on his face. Harry was getting a bad feeling about coming to Diagon Alley today and he was proven right when Lockhart noticed him and pulled him on the stage with him and to make things worse Harry was forced to take a picture with the man. Harry tried to escape but the man wasn't about to let go and told the whole shop that he donated his books to Harry since he was such a big fan of his works and as a final message he announced that he would be teaching 'Defense against the Dark Arts' at Hogwarts the coming year making Harry groan.

While Dan and Emma were laughing at Harry's misfortune, Hermione thought it was absolutely brilliant to have such a wonderful and knowledgeable teacher. She did feel a little bad for Harry though knowing that he hated the attention and fame that came with being 'the boy who lived'. After a small problem with Draco and his dad, the four of them bid the Weasley's goodbye and Harry and Hermione told Ron and Ginny that they would be seeing them on the train.

I don't want to make empty promises and then disappoint everybody by not releasing the chapter. So NO CHAPTER NEXT WEEK but in two weeks.

NEXT CHAPTER WILL BE RELEASED ON SUNDAY 10TH OF AUGUST. See you guys then.

Chapter 9: Start of the new year

The last week or so of the summer holiday's Harry and Hermione spend by reading ahead in their new books. Unlike before however Harry despised reading since all of them were written by Lockhart and it was noticeable while you read them. While some of the adventure's described in the books looked amazing, Harry couldn't imagine Lockhart doing or surviving half of them. For a guy who supposedly defeated werewolf's and vampire's he sure paid a lot of attention to his hair and white teeth. Throughout the book he described his favorite color, his favorite drink and so on making it more a biography than a book on 'Defense against the Dark Arts' in his opinion. Hermione however was blabbering on and on about how great Lockhart was and it was starting to get on his nerves but Harry kept his mouth shut for the time being, he would have to see in class how good the man truly was.

Both of them had started meditating to find their animal for the Animagus transformation but they didn't have any luck so far but that wasn't surprising since the book said it would take several weeks or months to find what they were looking for. Still they continued eagerly, meditation was an excellent way to calm down and relax and they both had experience with it from their Occlumency training. Other than that they had found several nice spells in the book that Harry had bought in Diagon Alley before and they were eager to try them out. They had even started to plan for the rituals that they would be doing as soon as possible.

The next morning they left of King Cross station where they would take the train to Hogwarts once again. When they arrived Harry turned to Hermione's parents once again thanking them for a lovely time. Hermione's parents promptly invited him over for the next holidays saying that he was always welcome. They gave each of the kids a big hug and told them to write often and to be good, to which both Harry and Hermione promised that they would. After passing through the barrier they quickly chose a compartment and installed themselves waiting for the train to leave. Just then Ron and his sister Ginny arrived and they immediately went over to Harry and Hermione wanting to be with their friends.

“Hey Harry, Hermione how was your summer?” Ron asked, even though they had seen each other at Diagon Alley they didn’t had the chance to catch up with each other.

“Hello Ron, hey Ginny summer was great, especially the second part.” Harry said greeting the two siblings. Ginny’s face was red like the last time but Harry ignored it.

“Second part?” Ron asked curiously.

“Harry spend August at my place, Ron. We had lots of fun didn’t we Harry?” Hermione said making Harry smile and nod. He truly did have a lot of fun with Hermione and her parents.

“Fun? I can imagine what fun is for you guys. Bet you did nothing but read and study ahead.” Ron snorted knowing both of his friends were bookworms.

“I’ll have you know that we did lot of fun things Ronald Weasley. We went swimming, went to the movies and visited London which was great. And yes we did study a bit since all our homework was done by then.” Hermione said crossing her arms in front of her chest.

“But those are muggle things, how can those things be fun?” Ron said. His dad loved muggle things but never seemed to understand what they were meant for or how they worked.

“Never mind Ron, you would have to know how the muggle world works to understand. Tell you what, if you want we’ll explain a little about Muggles, that way you can understand.” Harry said before both of them started to quarrel again.

“No thanks Harry, I have enough to do with the normal classes.” Ron quickly said not wanting to have to be submitted to Harry’s and Hermione’s lectures on Muggles.

Harry shrugged and continued reading in one of Lockhart’s books, at least Hermione too had noticed that there were several contradictions in his books and a lot of them were filled with useless information like his favorite food and drinks. Nevertheless she was prepared to give

him the benefit of the doubt and wait until they had class with him before she made her final judgment on the man. Harry however was sure the man was a fraud and just good with words but he had no way to prove it so there wasn't much he could do.

A few hours after they left King Cross a annoying visitor arrived at their compartment. Malfoy had clearly gotten some confidence over the summer judging from the confident look on his face. He and his two cronies slammed open the door scaring both Ginny and Hermione in the process. He just strutted inside and Harry knew this would mean trouble for them and readied his wand. He kept it hidden behind his book so Malfoy couldn't see it.

"Well, well what do we have here? Potty, the mudblood and two Weasels! For god's sake Potter, find yourself some friends that you won't have to be embarrassed about." Malfoy sneered.

Harry just ignored Malfoy while Ron was ready to jump up and ram his fist into the blonde's arrogant face. Ginny and Hermione were waiting to see what would happen. Malfoy who was expecting Harry to say something just waited for Harry to react, when he saw that Harry just ignored him he whipped out his wand. Before he could do anything however he felt a spell impacting but nothing seemed to happen.

"What's the matter Potty, forgot how to do magic?" Malfoy laughed but not a second later his stomach started to act out weird and it was making him very uncomfortable. He started sweating and suddenly he just turned around and pushed Crabbe and Goyle aside to race to the toilet with them on his heels. The whole train could see him race to find the nearest toilet but unfortunately he didn't manage to reach it in time and a disgusting odor filled the wagon.

Back with Harry and the rest, Harry explained that he hit Malfoy with an curse that cause diarrhea to clean out the bowels. Ron started laughing so hard he almost fell out of his seat while Hermione and Ginny just made a face that said how gross they found that curse.

"Oh don't look at me like that Hermione. He was being a git and he deserved it." Harry said innocently making Hermione laugh.

“Fine, but you better hope we don’t get in any trouble because of this.” Hermione said sternly but Harry could see that she was trying not to laugh out loud.

The rest of the trip was spend in tranquility with Harry and Hermione reading in their book, Ginny staring at Harry (much to Harry’s dismay) and Ron trying to get Harry to listen to the things he did in the holidays. Before they knew it they heard the announcement that they were arriving and that they would have to change in their Wizarding clothes. When they arrived at the station Hagrid called all the first years to him and told the rest to get in a carriage which would take them to Hogwarts. Harry had been wondering how they would reach Hogwarts and he was surprised to see that the carriages were being moved by an invisible source and vowed to ask Hagrid about it later on. The ride didn’t take long and when they arrived at the castle they were told to go straight to the Great Hall for the opening feast.

When Harry entered the Great Hall, he immediately started groaning and even a small curse came from his mouth. Hermione turned towards where Harry was looking and saw Gilderoy Lockhart sitting at the teachers table between Professor Sprout and Snape. Both of them seemed very annoyed at sitting beside the man and where busy ignoring the man who just kept on talking from what Hermione could see. She stifled a small laugh at Harry’s annoyance but dragged him to the table with her.

“Come on, Harry it can’t be that bad? You knew he was going to be here right?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah, I knew it but still, you can’t blame me for hoping it was all a bad dream.” Harry whispered to her making her smile.

“I still say you should give him the benefit of the doubt. Who knows maybe he’s really as good as his book portray him.” Hermione said.

“I told you, I’ll believe it when we have our first lesson. Trust me, I know a fake when I see one. I’ve lived with three of them for all my live.” Harry said calmly.

“Well, I for one think he’s great so I’m sure the things we learn from him will be useful.” She answered before looking at the now entering first year students.

Harry just kept quiet about the Lockhart subject for now and waited for the sorting to begin. Since the only person he knew that was getting sorted was Ron’s sister he didn’t really pay attention but he did hear Ginny getting sorted into Gryffindor. He cheered with the rest of the Weasley’s and he could see that Ginny was very relieved to be in the same house as him and her brothers. The rest of the evening went fairly quick and Harry passed a paper to Hermione on which had a message to meet him early in the morning so they could discuss where and when they would do the rituals they talked about during his stay. Hermione nodded and went upstairs feeling tired from the trip and well fed from the feast.

Early the next morning Harry made his way down the stairs to the common room where he and Hermione had agreed to meet. They would discuss when and where they would do the rituals since it needed some time and preparation. It wouldn’t do if you got caught no matter what kind of ritual it was since all rituals were considered Dark Arts. Therefore this would need some planning but Harry wasn’t worried, the two of them together were sure to come up with some kind of plan.

Hermione was already waiting for him and smiled when he bid her a good morning which she returned. She had slept very well and she was anxious to start school again. Although the fact that Lockhart was teaching this year might have something to do with that. Both of them left the common room, after waking up the Fat Lady, and wandered towards the Great Hall for breakfast. They sat down looking around but since it was fairly early they were the only ones present at the time, even the teachers weren’t there yet.

“So, when do you think we should do them?” Harry said knowing she understood what he meant.

“I think it would be best if we wait till weekend, every student and teacher sleeps in at Saturday giving us a little more time.” Hermione whispered back.

“Good thinking, we should try to find a abandoned classroom somewhere away from popular places.” Harry answered.

Seeing that the other students were starting to arrive for breakfast Hermione nodded her agreement and started talking about something completely different so that they wouldn't be overheard. Harry just started eating breakfast while listening to his friend. When he was about to finish eating Ron entered the Great Hall and sat down next to them. He was still yawning and his hair stood in every direction making Harry laugh until Ron pointed out that he always wore that look, he stopped laughing immediately and finished his breakfast. Ron however knew that Harry wasn't really mad and attacked his own plate that was filled with just about everything Hogwarts breakfast had to offer.

While Ron was pigging out on breakfast, making both Harry and Hermione feel slightly sick with the way he ate Prof. McGonagall was distributing the class schedules to her young students. She smiled at Harry before giving him his paper, Harry wished her a good morning and look at his schedule before loudly groaning about something.

“Something the matter, Mr. Potter?” McGonagall asked wondering what made him groan like that.

“Everything is fine Professor. It's only that we have Defense against the Dark Arts first thing after lunch. That's enough to ruin my appetite.” Harry said before sighing.

“I see. Between you and me Mr. Potter, Prof. Lockhart isn't exactly my favorite person either. He talks way too much about himself, off course you didn't hear me say anything like that. ” She said winking at Harry. She truly liked the young boy, he was always polite and even though he got himself in trouble more often than she could count she couldn't help but like the boy. Like father, like son she mused.

“I didn't hear a thing Professor.” Harry said earning a smile from his teacher before she continued handing out the schedules.

Hermione couldn't believe what she had heard, one of her favorite professors had the same thoughts like Harry. She could deal with Harry's criticism but when a professor like Prof. McGonagall said it too maybe she would have to rethink her opinion. Luckily for her Harry wasn't the type of person to rub in someone's mistake or laugh about it. She still stood by her decision to give the man the chance to prove himself, he deserved that much.

After breakfast they made their way outside to the greenhouse's where they would have Herbology class with Prof. Sprout. When they arrived they found said professor talking to Lockhart who was lecturing her on something. When she saw that her students had arrived she quickly excused herself and told them to get inside greenhouse number 3 for the lesson. Just as Harry wanted to get inside only to have his arm grabbed from behind him by Lockhart.

"My apologies Prof. Sprout but I would like to have a word with young Harry here. It won't take long just a few minutes." He said before dragging Harry away.

"Harry, I can only imagine what you must be thinking right now." He said confusing Harry. "you don't have to worry about a thing Harry, I'm not here to take your place as most famous person in Hogwarts. I only want to instruct you young ones how to become successful." Harry just stared at the man incapable to say anything.

"Harry, I feel that you and I should work together. Can you imagine what it would be like? The two most famous wizards working together, we would conquer the world my boy." Lockhart already imagining the money and fame he would receive.

"No thanks, sir. I don't care for fame or recognition, I'm just Harry a second year student at Hogwarts. Now if you excuse me, I have a class that I need to get to." Harry said quickly before he lost his temper at the man.

"Very well Harry, I understand. You want to make it on your own, I respect that. Be sure to come to me if you have questions." Lockhart called after him.

After the lesson Harry told Hermione what had happened on their way to the next class which was Charms. Harry was still pretty agitated and it took him until halfway the Charm lesson before he felt calm again. Thanks to Hermione and Prof. Flitwick's enthusiasm he felt that he could leave the incident behind him and when it was time for lunch he was happily chatting away with Hermione about the charms they had just practiced and learned. At lunch was nearing its end however he remembered that the next class was Defense and he wondered what would happen. He looked at his friend and saw that she could hardly wait for the class to start. When they arrived at the classroom for the Defense Against the Dark Arts they found it completely empty so all the students just went inside waiting for their professor to arrive. Most of the girls in the class were happily chatting away about how handsome and strong their new teacher was. This, off course made most of the boys groan and when one of them said something bad about Lockhart almost all of the girls turned to him with an icy glare that told him to keep his mouth shut or that they would do it for him. After that most of the guys just kept silent.

Just when Harry thought he couldn't listen any longer to the things the girls were gossiping about Lockhart made his way into the classroom strutting around like he was the prince of Wales himself. He smiled at the class making practically all the girls swoon on their feet before causally sitting down on his desk.

"Good afternoon boys and lovely ladies, welcome to your first class of Defense Against the Dark Arts in your second year here at Hogwarts. I'm sure you all recognized me but who those who don't know me I'll introduce myself." He said while running a hand through his hair. "My name is Gilderoy Lockhart, three time winner of the 'Most Charming Smile' award by Wizard Weekly, member of the 'League of Dark Arts fighters' , winner of the 'Order of Merlin third class' and author of my own series of books." He finished and winked at the girls who promptly started giggling.

"But off course we're not here to talk about me but to learn how to defend ourselves against the Dark Arts. Before we start on that, I have devised a small test just to see where you stand in your studies." He continued earning a loud groan from most of the class. He then started to distribute a test to everyone in the class. When

Harry received his he couldn't believe just how much it was, there had to be at least ten pages full of questions.

"Okay, you have until the end of the first period to finish the test. Don't worry if you don't know everything, that's why I'm asked to teach you so that you'll know it by the end of the year." Lockhart said while flashing his pure white teeth. "Begin."

Harry turned his test and filled in his name before reading the first question. After reading it he frowned and turn the page to look at the other questions. It seemed that every question had to do with Lockhart himself instead of anything remotely related to Defense. He couldn't believe some of the idiotic questions that were asked and wondered if he was the only one to find this extremely pointless.

'What in the world is this?' Harry thought. 'Question 21: What is Gilderoy Lockhart's most outstanding quality?' and this 'Question 33: what is Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite color?'

Harry just shook his head and started answering the questions. Off course he didn't have a clue but he figured he could have some fun with answering them completely wrong and hopefully the man would take a hint and leave him alone.

'Let's see, answer to question 21: his modesty, Gilderoy Lockhart is extremely modest.' 'Question 33: favorite color is pink' and 'Question 46: What's Gilderoy Lockhart's dream: world domination'

Harry continued writing silly answers to the even sillier questions until the time was up and Lockhart collected everyone's test. He quickly browsed through them, reading some of the answers the students had written.

"Well, I must say that I'm a little disappointed. Only one student knew that my favorite color is lilac and that my dream is world peace." He said sighing loudly. "No matter, by the end of the year you'll be able to answer each of these questions correctly, I'll make sure of that."

For the next 10 minutes he continued correction some of the questions he had asked but nobody really cared. The guys because

the man was starting to get on their nerves and the girls because they were too busy staring at him. When he finally finished talking about the test Lockhart put a large box on the teachers desk. A black cloth was covering it and every once in a while the box would move slightly indicating that something was locked up inside it.

“Alright boys and girls time for your first lesson. Today I managed to find you a creature feared amongst the Wizarding world, it has vicious teeth and claws capable of killing the most strongest of men but don’t worry I’m here to protect you all.” He said and pulled the cloth of the box. Most of the girls screamed but nothing happened, Harry looked at the box which was in reality a cage where a dozen Cornish Pixies were flying around using their little blue wings. Harry sighed at the sight of the Pixies.

‘This is a creature feared in the Wizarding world? Give me a break will you?’ he asked himself.

Apparently Harry wasn’t the only one who thought so and Dean Thomas voiced his opinion saying that Pixies were anything but scary. Sure they had sharp teeth and claws but they were also tiny so they wouldn’t be able to do that much damage. Lockhart laughed at Dean saying that they were formidable opponents who were fast and aggressive while he kept rattling the cage making the pixies angrier by the minute. He then opened the cage door and allowed the Pixies to escape creating a mass panic in the class mostly due to the girls who were yelling and screaming their head off. After a minute of pure chaos Lockhart took out his wand and uttered a spell but instead of rounding up the pixies he only managed to enrage them further making them attack him. Seeing all the pixies coming his way Lockhart squealed like a little girl and ran out of the classroom closing the door behind him. Harry couldn’t hold it any longer and started laughing so hard he had tears in his eyes from amusement.

“Some hero he is. Still not convinced Hermione?” he said to her when he saw the shock on her face.

“I guess you were right Harry, I can’t believe that someone who wrote all those books could be a fake.” She said very disappointed. When

she saw Lockhart squeal and run away she knew Harry had been right all along.

“Don’t worry about Hermione, I only knew it because I’m used to see his type at the Dursley’s.” Harry said while giving her a smile.

“Yes well, how about we round up these pixies before someone gets hurt?” Hermione said while staring at Neville who was being lifted into the air by his ears. Harry nodded and they started using the ‘Immobulus’ charm to freeze the Pixies and grabbed them before putting them back in the cage. After a good 10 minutes they had captured everyone of the Pixies and everyone calmed down again. Not a second later the bell indicated the end of class and the students left the classroom not once looking back at the Pixies.

Finally the first weekend of the school year had arrived and Harry couldn’t be happier, for the whole week he had to deal with Lockhart’s attempts to convince him that they should work together and it was driving him crazy. It was so bad that even Hermione was getting annoyed at the man and that was saying a lot. The other classes went great (well except potions) and both of them enjoyed them even though they were ahead of those lessons, still it was fun to review the things they learned beforehand. Tonight however they would perform the first of the two rituals they wanted to use, they had discussed which one they would do first and had decided that the sleep reducing ritual was the most interesting at the moment. The bone strengthening ritual took a lot more time since they would have to perform it several times until every bone they wished to strengthen had undergone the ritual. They could do those rituals spread over the rest of the term since they didn’t see anything that showed any sign of danger to them yet. They didn’t forget Dobby’s warning however and remained on their toes the whole time.

Harry quietly made his way down the stairs to the common room not wanting to wake up his roommates though that was next to impossible if you knew that Ron snored louder than chainsaw cutting down a tree. He only had to wait a few minutes for Hermione to appear and together they put on the invisibility cloak and exited the common room through the portrait of the Fat Lady who didn’t even woke up. They slowly started walking towards an abandoned

classroom that they had found during their explorations the week before, the classroom was situated in a part of the castle that was rarely used anymore so they were pretty sure that they were safe from detection. Once their Hermione quickly cast a locking spell at the door and a silencing spell to cover up any sound from the inside while Harry prepared for the ritual. He had to draw several large runes on the floor but they had practiced them during the summer so this went without any problem, next he would have to draw a rune on his forehead but he would let Hermione handle that and in return he would draw hers. They didn't waste any time and started, after drawing the rune on his forehead Harry went to sit in the large circle and started reciting the magic spell. Five minutes of reciting and a large white light blinded both of them before fading entirely. Harry looked a little tired but otherwise he felt fine, the rune on his forehead was fading and ten seconds later it was completely gone indicating the ritual had been performed flawlessly. Hermione too got the rune and performed the ritual to a perfection and after erasing every trace of what they did they slowly made their way back to the common room to get some sleep. All in all the ritual had taken about an hour to complete so both of them were very proud of succeeding. Now they would wait a few weeks before starting on the second ritual so that they didn't raise any suspicion.

The next day both of them felt very relaxed after a few hours of sleep and smiled at each other, Hermione told him that he had picked a very useful thing and that it would be very handy for during their OWL exams in their fifth year making Harry chuckle at Hermione. They were only second years so there was no reason to think about the fifth year exams after all. They spent their weekend making their homework for the next weeks and even visited Hagrid who was very glad to see them again. Harry even played some chess with Ron though he still lost every game they played. If there was something that Ron was good at it was goofing off and playing chess. Hermione had talked a bit to Ginny who was only too happy to have someone to talk with since her brothers seemed to neglect her a little bit. Hermione told her that she was sure that her brothers wanted her to meet new people and make friends instead of constantly relying on her brothers which made Ginny think before she nodded promising to at least make an effort in making some friends.

It was now nearing the end of October and the year had been great so far in Harry opinion, he and Hermione had already completed one ritual and they were miles ahead compared to their classmates. Only one thing was bothering Harry, one person named Gilderoy Lockhart followed Harry around like a lost puppy. No matter how much he tried he couldn't get rid of the man and it was starting to get on his nerves, even Hermione had said it was creepy. Harry would have used his invisibility cloak to escape but he didn't want to get caught and getting it confiscated. Harry's preparations and plans had been going great as well, both he and Hermione had started learning Legimency on top of their normal studies and they had made good progress. They thought that learning that skill would pay off later on for spying and the likes. One thing that they didn't finish yet was their Animagus training, the mediation proved to be no problem but finding the matching animal with their characters was way more difficult.

Harry and his classmates were heading towards the Great Hall for dinner when all of the sudden Prof. Lockhart jumped from behind a statue scaring everyone. Harry groaned loudly knowing that the man was only here to annoy and bother him. He was proven right when Lockhart asked him to help him later on that evening with something of great importance and of course Harry couldn't refuse a teachers request. Hermione took pity on her best friend knowing that he truly didn't like the man but promised him that she would wait up for him in the common room. Harry spend lunch dreading what was about to come but in the end accepted his cruel fate of helping Gilderoy Lockhart.

Later that evening Harry was having the worst night ever since he learned about being a wizard. Lockhart had asked him to help replying to all his fan's letters, he had Harry write the reply's while he put them in envelopes and sealed them shut before adding them to the pile of finished letters. Harry had been here for over 3 hours and he was getting tired and his hand started cramping up from all the writing he had to do. Lockhart however seemed to enjoy every minute of it and Harry was starting to ask himself if the man wasn't a bit touched in the head. Another thing he wondered about was how that a man like him managed to become a professor at Hogwarts, surely there had to be more suited people out there. Weren't there certain

qualifications and credentials that one needed to have before one could be considered fit to become a teacher?

Another hour later Harry finally had enough and started sighing trying to alert Lockhart that he was getting tired but the man seemed to be ignoring him or rather he was so wrapped up that he didn't hear Harry at all. All of the sudden Harry thought he heard something move but dismissed it as he and Lockhart were the only ones in the room but when he heard it again his head snapped up and he stopped writing.

'kill, I want to kill, I want to feast.'

"Did you hear that?" Harry asked perplexed.

"Hear what young Harry?" Lockhart responded uninterested.

"I heard a voice saying it wants to kill." Harry said while trying to listen if he could hear the voice again. Unfortunately or fortunately he didn't hear a thing. He wondered if he had imagined the voice, after all who wouldn't start hearing voice after signing 'thank you' cards for Gilderoy Lockhart.

"Perhaps you should get some rest Harry." Lockhart said before looking at the time. "My goodness, no wonder that you're tired we've been here for over four hours. Time sure does fly when you're having fun doesn't it?" He said while giving Harry a dazzling smile.

Harry however didn't bother to answer such a question and just packed his bag and left after wishing his teacher a good night. He was glad that he already completed the sleep reducing ritual so that four hours of sleep would be enough to recover from this punishment. When he wandered through the halls of the castle back to the Gryffindor common room he took his time to enjoy the cool air and the wonders that Hogwarts possessed. But while wondering around he suddenly heard that same noise again and it seemed to come from inside the walls, deciding that he wanted to know what was going on he followed the noise and started running. He ran and ran trying to keep up but in the end he lost track and gave up, seeing he was close to the common room he continued and crossed the corner only to stumble on something and he almost fell on his face. Cursing

a little he used the Lumos spell to light up the hallway to see what he had tripped on. When he saw Mrs. Norris as stiff as a board in a position that showed she was terrified he couldn't even begin to think what had caused this. Before he could do anything however Mr. Filch, the man who took care of the castle appeared behind him asking what was going on.

"My cat, you killed my cat." He cried out alerting almost the whole castle. "What did you do to my cat?"

"I swear Sir, I didn't do anything to her." Harry stammered knowing he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. "I found her like this, I swear."

"Liar, you kids are all the same." Mr. Filch said while advancing towards Harry. "I'll kill you!" he yelled out before lunging at Harry.

"Argus, that's enough!" a loud voice boomed through the hall. Harry looked behind the man who was planning his demise and relaxed when he saw the headmaster and Prof. McGonagall standing there.

"But Professor, he killed Mrs. Norris. I demand retribution." He spat out violently.

"Come now Argus, do you really believe Mr. Potter would be capable of such an act?" McGonagall asked.

"Those little bastards are capable of everything." Mr. Filch said while glaring at Harry.

"Harry why don't you tell us what happened." Dumbledore asked trying to figure out what was going on.

Harry started to tell him about how Lockhart had asked for his help and how he spend four hours signing 'Thank you notes' to his fans and that he had he just left the professors company to return to the common room. He didn't mention the noise and voice he heard knowing that they wouldn't believe him even if he did. He said that he was taking the long way to get to the common room since he enjoyed wondering around the castle.

“Young Harry here tells the truth Headmaster. He was in my office helping me to answer my mails and we were having a great time, didn’t we Harry.” Lockhart said, he too had heard the commotion and had come to check it out. Harry’s facial expression told everyone just how much fun it had been, none what so ever.

“See Argus? Besides I seriously doubt that Mr. Potter here would be able of such a magical feat as petrifying your cat.” Dumbledore said to the older concierge.

“Petrified? You mean she isn’t dead?” He asked with a little hope in his voice.

“No Argus, she’s just petrified but I’m afraid it will take some time to come up with a cure.” Dumbledore said while placing a hand on the man’s shoulder.

Mr. Filch nodded and slowly picked up his petrified familiar and followed Dumbledore after he dismissed Harry saying that everything was alright. Harry just nodded and quickly ran to the common room hoping Hermione would still be up. Whatever had happened made Harry think back about the warning Dobby gave them during the summer, until now that warning was slightly forgotten seeing that nothing bad had happened for quite some time. Now however they would have to be careful and pay close attention to anything suspicious. Sighing he gave the portrait that guarded the Gryffindor common room the password and went inside.

Thank you for reading and I hope I did a good job. The next chapter will be released on Sunday the 24th of August. See you then.

Chapter 10: Slytherin's heir and Parseltongue

After Harry informed Hermione on what had happened including the voice he heard Hermione suggested to keep things quiet for a while. The teachers would be on guard now so they would have to postpone the second ritual for now. Harry agreed immediately saying that he didn't want to raise any more suspicion on them anyway. They said goodnight and went upstairs to their dorm to get some much needed rest and relaxation.

Of course by the time Harry got up the next morning the story of how Mrs. Norris had been petrified had spread around the castle and Harry's involvement had become known as well. This made him tell the whole story to everyone in the common room but he didn't want any more rumors to spread so better tell them what happened. Most of them believed the story but he could see a few people being wary of him. It made him sigh, the year had been going so well and now he was once again in the spotlight for something he didn't know anything about. The next few days would be tiring he could already tell.

"Good morning Harry, sleep well?"

"I wish I stayed in bed Hermione, can you believe the stories that are spreading around the castle?"

"Yeah, I especially like the one that says that you petrified her because she looked at you funny."

"It's not funny Hermione, already people are starting to believe that nonsense."

"You're right, I'm sorry. Don't worry about it Harry, things will be fine."

Harry didn't really believe her but smiled anyway before they exited the common room to have breakfast in the Great hall. He could only imagine how the other houses would react when they heard some of the ridiculous stories out there. On their way to the Great Hall they passed several students of other years and houses and a lot of them started whispering or pointing at Harry saying he would petrify them if they stared at him too long. One of them even started screaming not

to harm him before running away as fast as his legs could carry him. Hermione was doing her best to distract her friend but it proved to be very difficult as more and more students crossed their path to the Great Hall.

Once they reached the Great Hall Harry and Hermione make their way to the Gryffindor table and sat down trying not to attract too much notice to themselves. Naturally this was impossible for the Boy-who-lived and people started gossiping and staring as soon as he entered the Great Hall. The two friends tried to ignore the rest of the students and attempted to enjoy a nice and peaceful breakfast. But they didn't count on Ron's non-existing tact and bluntness.

"Hey Harry, good job on that stupid cat. How did you do it?"

"Ron, I didn't do anything okay? I just found her on my way back from Lockhart's little signing session. Now please stop spreading rumors."

"Really Ron, how could you believe that Harry would do such a thing?"

"What? I know that there are a lot of people who wouldn't mind being rid of that menace."

"That's very insensitive of you Ron. No matter how you may think about Mrs. Norris, she's still a living being and a familiar to Mr. Filch. How would you feel if Scabbers got hurt or killed?"

Ron just shrugged and continued eating his breakfast. Hermione was somewhat peeved that Ron would ignore her like that but Harry managed to distract her by asking some questions for the upcoming Charm class. After breakfast Harry and Hermione just went straight to classroom not wanting to deal with all the staring and whispering. Luckily Prof. Flitwick had a firm grasp on his class and the lesson past without any problems for which Harry was very grateful. He could only imagine how Snape would react if they had class today but seeing as today was Friday he was spared of that, he hoped that by the time he had potion class next week the rumors would have died down and things would be back to normal.

The next few weeks passed quickly and to Harry's relief the rumors died out and people seemed to forget the incident ever happened. Harry and Hermione spend their days reading and working on new spells, so far they had mastered almost the whole second year worth of Charm and Transfiguration spells but for Defense Against The Dark Arts they had a little more trouble since Lockhart's book were so useless. They had been asking some of the older years if they had the normal books and luckily one of them was kind enough to lend them her book. So now they were focusing on catching up with those spells as well. Now that things had calmed down again Harry was thinking of starting on the bone strengthening ritual which would take a lot of time since they only could do one pair of bones at the time. For example they would strengthen the bones in the forearms first, then the upper-arm and lastly the shoulders. This alone would take three sessions so completely strengthen all the major bones in their bodies would take the rest of the year.

They had been preparing the room carefully over the next few days and tonight they would perform it for the first time. Both of them were fairly confident in their skill as they had practiced the ritual over the last few days as well. Like the sleep-reducing ritual they had to learn several runes and those would have to be carved into their flesh above the bone they wished to strengthen. They needed a ritual knife for this but as Harry had prepared for everything he had also bought one during his time in Diagon Alley. Hermione didn't look forward to cutting herself but knew that it was necessary besides the book said that as soon as the ritual was completed the cuts and pain would disappear instantly. After waiting for everyone to go to bed Harry and Hermione crawled out of the common room under the invisibility cloak and slowly made their way to the classroom. To be honest, the prettification of Mrs. Norris was a blessing in disguise as they didn't have to worry about being caught by the ever vigilant cat. After reaching the classroom they quickly went to work and both of them finished carving the runes into their forearms five minutes later. The pain had been much less than they first had thought; they only needed to cut slightly deep enough to draw blood. After reciting the enchantment a large flash blinded them for a second before everything went back to normal. Harry looked at his arms and saw the unblemished skin not a trace of the ritual remaining. Hermione quickly erased every trace of magic in the room before they went

back to the common room to get some sleep as well. The ritual didn't take more than a half an hour but just to be safe they had decided to take their time to complete it.

On their way back to the common room Harry suddenly heard the strange voice again. He told Hermione about it and they decided to try and locate it. Running under the invisibility cloak wasn't easy but they managed somehow. They ran through the corridors following the hissing. Hermione told Harry that she couldn't hear anything but some muffled hissing but Harry was hearing the words 'Kill' and 'Feast' over and over again. Turning around the corner they bumped into something causing them to fall on the ground. When they turned their head to look at what they had tripped over Hermione would have cried out loudly if Harry hadn't been able to place his hand in front of her mouth. After a moment of struggling she calmed down enough so he let her go knowing she wouldn't yell again. He started whispering at her trying to calm her down some more.

"Sorry Hermione but if you yelled out loud you would have alerted the teachers. Remember that we can't be seen since it's way after curfew."

"Harry, that's Colin McCreevy, a first year Gryffindor. What happened to him?"

"I don't know Hermione but we better get out of here before we get blamed for this."

"We can't leave him here Harry who knows what will happen to him."

"Hermione think about it. He's petrified just like Mrs. Norris is, so if we're seen here we'll have to answer questions we don't want to be asked. I don't want to leave him like this but we don't have a choice. We can't be found out."

"I know but...."

"Don't worry, I'm sure a teacher will pass by soon enough. There's nothing we can do now."

Harry turned around to walk away but he suddenly froze in mid-step causing Hermione to bump into him. She saw Harry staring at the wall and peered over his shoulder to see what had captured her friends' attention like this. She gasped when she saw a message written on the wall in a red substance making her wonder why they didn't see it until now. Harry approached the wall and read the message

'THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE'

They would have stayed a little longer had they not heard the noise of several people approaching from behind them. Quickly they wrapped the invisibility cloak around them and turned the corner as fast as they could make their way back to the common room. No doubt in a few moments the whole castle would be in a state of chaos. When they passed the painting they quickly went to their respective room and pretended to sleep soundly. To their surprise nothing happened and both of them fell asleep when the adrenaline and shock was over.

The next morning Harry woke up wondering if he had dreamed about finding a first year Gryffindor petrified in the hallway but after a few seconds he realized that it had truly happened. He was surprised however that the news hadn't spread already seeing that each House had their resident gossip girls. Perhaps the teachers wanted to keep the situation under control by not saying anything but he dismissed that thought knowing that Colin's classmates would see that he was missing. He would have to see how Dumbledore would take care of such a situation. Harry saw Hermione sitting in one of the comfortable chairs and called out to her. Hearing her name she looked up from her book and joined Harry to get some breakfast.

"How did you sleep?"

"Terrible, I couldn't help but think about poor Colin."

"I know me too. Best not to say anything about it, you never know who's listening."

"Any idea what could have done that?"

“Not a clue but we’ll have to be careful from now on. Remember the warning Dobby gave us during the summer.”

While they were talking they had reached the Great Hall and they quickly took their usual position at the Gryffindor table. Slowly but surely the rest of the student arrived and soon the whole Hall was filled with sound of people talking and eating. Harry paid close attention to the table where the teachers were seated but so far none of them had given a sign of saying anything about Colin. Finally as almost everyone had finished eating Dumbledore stood up and walked around the table and halted just in front of it facing the students. When they saw the headmaster standing in front of everyone the Great Hall felt silent and the students started wondering what was going on.

“If I may have your attention for a few moments. Thank you. Last night a terrible discovery has been made. I’m sure some of you Gryffindor’s have already noticed the absence of young Colin this morning. The truth is that the petrified body of Colin has been found late last night in one of the most remote parts of Hogwarts. We suspect that he fell victim to the same thing that petrified Mrs. Norris earlier this year.”

The students started to talk and whisper amongst each other and soon the whole Hall was buzzing with conversations about Mrs. Norris and Colin. The headmaster just cleared his throat indicating he wasn’t finished yet and after a few seconds things went silent once again.

“Unfortunately we don’t know the reason why Colin was in that particular part of Hogwarts as it hasn’t been in use for several years but as of this moment that part is closed off to any and all students. Please do not wonder around Hogwarts alone or after curfew, it was mere chance that our caretaker Mr. Filch used that corridor to get back to his office. If there is anyone who has an idea or maybe heard or seen something please let us know. One last thing is that there was a message written on the wall saying that the chamber of secrets has been opened again. Please do not go looking for this fabled chamber as no one has ever found it no matter how much they

searched. The location of the Chamber of Secrets is unknown and has been since the day Salazar Slytherin left Hogwarts.”

Harry shook his head at the headmaster’s words, didn’t he realize that because of what he had said everyone would be looking for that chamber. Didn’t he know that things like that were the things kids liked the most? After all doing things that were forbidden was the most exciting and fun, especially for kids. The headmaster had ensured that every kid would be looking for clues or the location of the ‘Chamber of Secrets’. He saw Prof. McGonagall and Flitwick shake their head as well and he knew that they had come to the same conclusion as he did. Hermione however had been thinking about a whole other matter entirely. Harry looked at the grin on her face and instantly knew that she had one of her crazy idea’s. After being dismissed by Dumbledore the students went to get ready for the day, Hermione pulled Harry along with her into a abandoned girls bathroom so she could explain her idea.

“Hermione this is a girl’s bathroom. Are you sure it’s safe to talk here?”

“Don’t worry Harry, this bathroom is hardly ever used since Moaning Myrtle haunts here.”

“Who’s Moaning Myrtle?”

“Oh she’s the ghost of a girl who died here in this toilet. She cries a lot and sometimes floods the place as well, that’s why nobody comes here.”

“She died here? How did that happen?”

“I don’t know but that’s not important now. I had this idea....”

Hermione would have continued had Moaning Myrtle not chosen that moment to appear behind her yelling in her ear. Hermione turned around clearly shocked at the appearance of Myrtle and immediately apologized for saying that her death wasn’t important. She knew how sensitive that subject was to the girl, she then introduced Harry and Myrtle to each other. She grinned when she saw just how much

Myrtle seemed to like Harry. After talking for a bit Myrtle went on her way to do whatever a ghost does and left the two alone.

“Wow, she’s kind of weird but in a good way if you can get her to stop crying.”

“Yeah anyway, I was about to explain my idea. Remember how we talked about the mansion you bought and how it would serve as a base of operations?”

“Sure but what does this have to do with the ‘Chamber of Secrets’?”

“Think about it for a second, if we could find that chamber it would be the perfect place for us. Nobody has ever found it in a thousand years so it must be very well hidden away from prying eyes. If we find it then we can use it for our base of operations while being at Hogwarts.”

“Hermione, that’s a brilliant idea but there’s only one problem with it. We don’t know where it is and on top of that we would have to deal with something that’s capable of petrifying people.”

“I didn’t say it would be easy but if anyone can do it it’s us don’t you think?”

“Okay let’s say that we go ahead with your plan, how and where should we start looking?”

“Well, the most obvious is the library but first there’s something that Prof. Dumbledore said that caught my attention. During his speech he said and I quote ‘...the chamber of secrets has been opened AGAIN’ end quote. Notice the word ‘again’, this means that the Chamber of Secret has been opened before.”

“But that would mean that someone has found it already. So how come nobody knows about it?”

“That’s exactly what I don’t understand. Maybe the person who found the Chamber wanted to keep it hidden from the public or maybe he or she never had the chance to tell anyone about it.”

“Not only that but the Headmaster seems to know more than he lets on about all of this. So does this mean that he was here when the Chamber was opened? Was he involved?”

“Good questions but I don’t believe that someone like Albus Dumbledore would be involved in something like this. I think we should start with looking up the legends around the Chamber of Secrets in the library. No matter how bizarre some legends may seem most of them have a small amount of truth inside them. Once we know more about the chamber itself then we can look into other things like its location and the fact that it has been opened before.”

Over the next few days Harry and Hermione spend their free time looking through books for any clue on the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets but so far they hadn’t found anything even remotely connected with the Chamber. It wasn’t until Hermione asked the History teacher about the Chamber that they finally learned something even though it didn’t help them with finding it. The fact that the Chamber had been constructed by Salazar Slytherin because he wanted to keep magic pure meaning that only Pure-bloods were worthy of learning magic was an interesting historical fact but nothing more than that. Harry and Hermione weren’t the only ones to look for the chamber, several older students had taken upon themselves the duty of discovering the chamber and its secrets. Dumbledore’s words had given the search for the Chamber an adventurous feeling and students of all ages went out to find it just like Harry predicted.

Seeing that they wouldn’t find anything about the Chamber in the library they decided to investigate any suspicious and tragic event that had happened in Hogwarts in the last century. They took this timeframe since both of them were convinced that Dumbledore knew more about these events than he was willing to share. They doubted that anything would have happened during his time as a student so they started their search at the beginning of the century. This meant however that they would have to look through a lot of data which would take at least several weeks or perhaps even months. Still they were determined to find it and wouldn’t give up no matter how much time they would have to spend looking through these records and newspapers.

"I can't believe the kind of stuff that has happened in this place. Look at this from 1901. 'After Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Slytherin, in favor of Gryffindor a huge fight broke out between both house ending with the death of 2 students when a 7th year student (name not disclosed) fired a close ranged 'Reducto'.' Guess the house rivalry was pretty strong in that period."

"Killing people just because they lost the match is just sad. And you wonder why I don't play Quidditch."

"Come on let's go otherwise we'll be late for dinner. We'll continue the search later on."

Harry nodded and followed Hermione out of the library towards the Great Hall. Things had calmed down a little when people figured out that the library didn't have anything on the Chamber of Secrets. More and more people began to realize that finding the chamber wouldn't be an easy task and one after another they gave up on finding it. Only a few of them continued stubbornly looking for clues. Harry and Hermione took their seat next to Ron, who they hadn't spoken to for a while. When they asked what he was up to he answered that he and his brothers were going to keep on looking and that the Weasley family would be the ones to find the Chamber. Ron asked them if they wanted to join as well but they politely refused saying that they were much too busy to help them look.

Halfway through dinner Harry looked at the head table and saw Lockhart and the headmaster talking and it seemed that Lockhart was very happy and excited about something as he was smiling and looking very pleased. Harry winced because this could only mean problems for him; Lockhart always had the tendency to try to use Harry in one of his schemes. No doubt this time would be just the same and suddenly his hunger had disappeared as fast as snow on a hot summer day. When he saw Dumbledore standing up he wondered what it could be this time.

"Now that we're all watered and fed it's time for me to give a good news for once. Being able to defend ourselves is something each and every one of us must know. To this purpose Prof. Lockhart proposed

to create a dueling club under his supervision and guidance. This club is mandatory for all students and will take place in this very Hall. Each year will have a day in the week to practice dueling so look for the announcement in the common rooms. Now I believe Prof. Lockhart has some words to say.”

“Thank you Headmaster. I just want to say that I will do my utmost best to instruct you in the art of Dueling. There is no need to worry, with me as your teacher you’ll be the best in no time. Off course you won’t be able to defeat me any time soon but there’s no helping that. I expect all of you to be at your best for the class so be sure to rest up.”

It didn’t need to be said that the dueling club was the subject in the common rooms that night. Boys were torn between feeling anxious at learning how the duel and feeling down because that meant spending more time with Lockhart while the girls were feeling the opposite. Harry and Hermione however were feeling both the negative sides of the coin, first they knew just how much of a fake Lockhart truly was and second they doubted that they would learn anything new. They had been studying way ahead of their classmates and were currently using one of Harry’s advanced books that he had bought in Diagon Alley. No doubt the dueling club would only use first year spells and charms instead of the more advanced stuff that was written in that book. Hermione pointed out that maybe it was for the best since using a Bone-crushing hex would be a little over the top anyway.

The second years would have their dueling lessons on Tuesday evening and when the first years came back after their first lesson looking extremely bored, the rest of the house couldn’t help but ask questions. Most of them were very disappointed when they heard that the class for the first years consisted only out of a boring lecture about Lockhart himself. Though he should have known better Harry was still somewhat surprised at hearing that. He sincerely hoped that their lesson wouldn’t be the same. Silently he cursed Dumbledore for making the class mandatory for everybody.

Finally after dinner the dueling lesson for the second years would start. The Great Hall had undergone a transformation as all the tables had been put away and a huge stage stood right in the middle of the

Hall. When finally everyone had assembled around the stage Lockhart made his appearance wearing his formal dueling clothes. Harry snorted at the outfit, it seemed to be made out of the purest silk and high quality materials and though making it a very classy and beautiful outfit, it was unfit to fight in. It offered almost no protection and would get destroyed easily. He wondered if Lockhart even realized just how much of a screw-up he really was.

“Hallo everybody and welcome to your first dueling lesson by yours truly. Now can everybody see me?” Harry had to bit his tongue not to reply something mean seeing as the man was wearing bright colored robes making him visible from a mile away. “Can everybody hear me? Okay then let’s get started.”

Lockhart then proceeded to tell the crowd some of his so called heroic adventure before he got up again and asked that his assistant would join him on the stage. Harry’s heart skipped a beat hoping that he wasn’t the one who had the unfortunate task of assisting Lockhart. Luckily for him someone emerged from the shadows and walked to the stage. People turned around to look at who would assist Lockhart and some of them (Harry included) couldn’t help but smile when they saw Severus Snape walking towards the stage with his usual sneer on his face. But the closer he got to the stage how bigger the signs of disgust seemed to show on the man’s face. Not many people were surprised to see that since it was well known that the potion master had a fierce dislike of the man he would be helping.

“Ah please give a big applause for our dear Prof. Snape who was kind enough to offer his assistance.”

“Now don’t worry about your teacher as I will not harm him in any way. We are both professionals so watch and learn from our example. We’ll start with the disarming hex called ‘Expelliarmus’, this is one of the most commonly used spells in a duel as it will disarm your opponent. We’ll use ‘Protego’ to protect ourselves. Ready Prof. Snape, on the count of three.”

Harry watched with anticipation at how the duel would go, although he disliked Snape he was rooting for him hoping that he would teach that pompous wannabe a lesson. He looked closely how both Snape

and Lockhart took their distance and walked away from each other. After they had gotten to their assigned places they turned around and counted loudly. Everyone was holding their breath wanting to see what would happen next and who would win the duel. They heard the count reaching three and a loud 'EXPELLIARMUS' sounded though the hall. The next thing they saw was Lockhart flying through the air before crashing down hard on his behind making him cry out in pain. People stared at first but once one student started snickering (Harry) everyone joined in and the Great Hall was filled with laughter. Snape didn't laugh but stood there waiting with the customary sneer on his face showing he had enjoyed seeing Lockhart flying and crashing.

"Well done Prof. Snape though I did let you hit me since I wanted to show them what would happen if you get hit with the spell." Lockhart said trying to save his reputation.

"Off course Prof. Lockhart. Shall we duel again? I wouldn't want anyone to think that the fabulous Gilderoy Lockhart can be defeated by a first year spell after all."

"Euh, how about we let some students duel? They are the ones who have to learn the spell isn't it?"

"Very well. Potter, Malfoy get up here."

Seeing that he didn't have a choice Harry walked to the stage and ignored the taunting of the Slytherin students as much as he could. The Gryffindor students were encouraging him to kick Malfoy aristocratic butt. Calmly getting on the stage he waited until Malfoy got there as well. Snape however was giving Malfoy some last minute advice before letting him pass.

"Alright, Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy will demonstrate the spell once again. Gentlemen, on the count of three. One, Two,..."

"Expelliarmus!"

Instead of waiting on the count of three, Malfoy had thrown the spell early trying to catch Harry off guard. Harry however had actually expected him to cheat and calmly ducked under the spell evading it

neatly. Lockhart, who had been standing right behind Harry, however didn't have the reflexes to dodge or cast the shielding spell got the full blast of the spell and was once again sending flying through the sky.

"Malfoy, are you that stupid that you don't know how to count to three? Not only do you cast the spell early your aim sucks as well." Harry said loudly making every student except the Slytherin's laugh loudly.

"Shut up Potter. You'll regret the day that you messed with me."

"Potter assume your position and get ready, this duel isn't over yet." Snape sneered before he once again whispered something in Malfoy's ear. Harry shrugged knowing that he could handle anything Malfoy could throw at him. Malfoy returned to his place and raised his wand and smirked. It seemed that whatever Snape had said gave him confidence in his abilities. Harry wondered what kind of advice Snape had given him but figured that he would see it soon enough. He decided to be the one to cast first this time though he would have to make sure he downplayed his skill a little. On the count of three Harry fired a weak 'Expelliarmus' that Malfoy barely evaded by jumping to the right.

"Serpensortia"

To Harry's and the rest of the students their amazement Malfoy's spell conjured a large snake which seemed to be really unhappy to be there. The snake hissed loudly and the students on the first row quickly took a step back not wanting to be attacked. Harry however didn't move a muscle, he was sure he had heard something. The snake hissed again and Harry's head shot up, he was sure of it now, he had understood the snake.

"Where? Bite I will. Don't come. Leave." The snake hissed viciously. Harry knew nothing about snakes but was sure that if the snake attacked a student things would get ugly. He figured that if he could understand the snake then maybe he could talk to it as well. Briefly he hesitated since he knew that people would be gossiping again about this ability and he wondered if he should just shut up but when he saw the snake approaching the students he acted.

“Stop.” To his surprise the snake actually stopped his advancement and turned its scaly head towards Harry. Students who heard Harry hissing immediately started whispering and took several steps backwards from him as well. The snake however turned back to face the students intent on defending itself.

“Stop! Do not bite, nobody will harm you.” Harry tried again. This time the snake halted its movements long enough for Snape to banish it. Harry relaxed knowing that the danger was over and looked at his fellow students. He sighed when he saw their reactions even though he was prepared. He walked off the stage back to his place next to Hermione who was looking worried as well. Lockhart who had been hiding as soon as he saw the large snake decided that this was enough action for one night and dismissed all of them before he ran to his office. The students left the Great Hall one by one but not before looking back at Harry and whispering to their friends. Even Gryffindor students were already talking about Harry’s ability to communicate with snakes. Harry just ignored them and left with Hermione next to him. At least he had one friend that wouldn’t judge him for something like this.

“Harry, why didn’t you tell me you’re a Parselmouth?” Hermione asked a bit hurt that Harry didn’t tell her.

“I would have if I knew Hermione, until now I never talked or heard snakes talk. I swear I didn’t know. Is that what they called it? A Parselmouth?” Harry explained.

“It’s okay, I believe you. Someone who can talk to snakes is called a Parselmouth while the language is called Parseltongue. It’s a really rare ability, in fact I believe the last one to have it was Voldemort himself.” Hermione said while comforting him a bit.

“Wonderful, now everyone is going to think that I’m the next Dark Lord or even that I’m Slytherin’s heir.” Harry sighed loudly.

“It doesn’t help that it is considered an evil ability as well. Guess we’ll just have to endure it and let it pass.” Hermione mumbled her response.

Harry's shoulders slumped and he sighed loudly. He knew how hard the next few weeks would be with all the gossiping and the pointing. He was already kind of used to it when people acted like idiots around him just because he was the Boy-who-lived but this would be many times worse. No doubt by this time tomorrow the most outrageous stories would be travelling the castle. They went up to the common room and Harry ignored the stares and the whispering and went straight to bed. He would have enough to deal with in the common weeks so he better use all the sleep he could get.

Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Any suggestions or remark are appreciated so don't hesitate.

The next chapter will be released on September 7th. See you guys then.

Chapter 11: Christmas holidays.

Just like they predicted the wildest stories were told about Harry and his ability to talk to snakes. At first Harry ignored them but after the third time a little first year Hufflepuff screamed bloody murder when he crossed him in the hallway Harry started to get a little angry. He had done nothing that warranted such fear of him, on the contrary he had stopped the snake from biting the students in the front row. Hermione too was getting annoyed; people were calling her crazy because she was friends with Harry or saying that she had to be the next Dark Lady or some nonsense like that. The ignorance of some people in the magical world amazed her and not in a good way.

There was one house who didn't participate in the gossiping and strangely enough it was Slytherin. Off course this can be explained by the fact that they refused to believe that someone like Harry could be the heir to the founder of their noble house. They couldn't ignore the fact that Harry could speak Parseltongue but they would be dammed if they accepted Harry as the heir of Slytherin. The idea of it was preposterous to begin with, a Gryffindor being the heir to the noblest house of Slytherin? Not in a million years. Off course that didn't stop them from insulting Harry at every possible occasion.

During breakfast Prof. McGonagall went over to see Harry telling him that the Headmaster wanted a word with him. Harry nodded and said he would go as soon as he finished eating. She told him the password was 'Mars bars' making Harry wonder how the Headmaster knew the muggle candy. Harry and Hermione had quickly found out that the Wizarding world understood little about the muggle world and the things they did know were either seriously outdated or completely wrong. Nevertheless Harry made his way over to the Headmasters office as soon as he was done eating. When he arrived at the large gargoye made of stone he gave the password and to his surprise the gargoye moved and revealed stairs which lead to the office itself. Going up the stairs he reached a large wooden door and when he was about to knock he heard a voice saying he could come in.

"Good morning Prof. Dumbledore. How are you, sir?"

“Ah good morning to you too Harry. I’m doing very well this morning, thank you for asking. How about you?” Dumbledore said while he motioned Harry to sit down.

“I could be better sir. I’m sure you noticed all the rumors this morning. Isn’t that why you called me here?”

“Sharp as always aren’t you Harry but yes you are correct. I felt that maybe I may be able to give you some advice and my humble opinion.”

“Sure, I could always use some advice on how to deal with this.” Harry nodded slightly.

“You see Harry; I’m not that surprised that you’re capable of speaking Parseltongue. I’m sure you know that Voldemort was a Parselmouth himself?”

“Yes, Hermione told me as much.” Harry told him.

“Ah yes, Miss Granger. Wonderful girl, smart and full of questions. I believe that the night when he tried to kill you, Voldemort involuntarily transferred some of his powers to you. Mainly the power of Parseltongue.”

“I see. That’s somewhat disturbing to hear, I mean what else has been transferred to me?” Harry frowned.

“Do not worry Harry; I don’t think you will become the next Dark Lord just because you can speak to snakes. Witches and wizards are afraid of things they don’t understand and unfortunately most of them are too lazy or just don’t care to try and understand things.”

“I’ve noticed that as well Professor. Is that why almost no pureblood witch or wizard has an accurate knowledge of the Muggle world?”

“To a certain extent yes, but mostly it is just because they think themselves superior to Muggles. They believe that because Muggles can’t use magic they’re inferior so they don’t bother to learn about them. A shame really, I quite enjoy Muggle candy.”

Harry was going to comment on the Headmasters password but a large flash to the right of him startled him and he ducked behind his chair not knowing what was going on. He peered from behind it and saw the most majestic creature he had ever laid eyes on. On a perch sat a large bird, easily three times Hedwig's size with bright red feathers. Harry couldn't help but stare at the creature and only stopped when he heard Dumbledore chuckle.

"I see that you are just as fascinated by Fawkes as I am Harry."

"Fawkes?" Harry asked amazed still looking at the creature.

"Yes, Fawkes is a phoenix that has honored me by choosing me as his companion. A phoenix is a marvelous being Harry, protectors of the Light and enemies to the Dark."

Harry was amazed at Fawkes and slowly approached the perch, with a shaking hand he tried to pet him but he wasn't sure Fawkes would allow him. Fawkes however seemed to have no objection and eagerly pressed his head into Harry's hand. While Harry was petting him Fawkes started a song and Harry immediately felt so much better, the song seemed to rejuvenate him and made his worry go away. It was the most amazing feeling Harry had ever had and when Fawkes stopped his song Harry felt somewhat saddened.

"It seems Fawkes has taken an interest in you as well Harry. Never before has Fawkes let anyone touch him like that, you should be honored."

"Thank you Fawkes, you're amazing. Your song was beautiful; I hope to hear it again some time." Fawkes just let out a few tones showing that Harry would always be welcome.

"Well Harry, I think it's about time you rejoined Miss Granger. I'm sure she's waiting to hear what happened. Just remember this last advice from an old man. It is not our abilities who define who we are but rather the choices we make. Think about it. Have a good day Harry."

‘Thank you Sir. I’ll remember your advice. Good day Sir, and you too Fawkes.’ Harry said before leaving the office.

Off course Harry had to give Hermione the whole talk again word for word and when he told about Fawkes he could see just how much she wanted to see the beautiful bird. He assured her that he would ask Dumbledore if she could come up and see him the next time he talked to the Headmaster. Seeing that classes were about to start they went to get their stuff and got ready for the rest of the day. Luckily they didn’t have Potions otherwise Harry’s mood would have plummeted below freezing point but as they only had Charms and Transfiguration things were not that bad.

The next few weeks went quickly for which Harry was thankful, the gossiping and pointing had lessened to a bearable level and classes were going great. Harry and Hermione were miles ahead of their classmates and their training was going splendidly as well. On top of Occlumency they had now a firm grasp on Leglimency as well, both of them had practiced hard on each other. This had another benefit as the training had strengthened their shields as well. Animagus training on the other hand was still going slow and difficult but they knew that it would take a lot of time so they weren’t worried. Because of the prettification of Colin they hadn’t been able to continue the Bone-strengthening ritual as that part of Hogwarts had been closed off by the teacher. This forced them to find a new location and after searching for a few days they believed to have found a safe place to perform them. As the Christmas holidays were just around the corner they decided to wait until then and maybe do several bones at the same time. They had lost a lot of time thanks to this ‘Chamber of Secrets’ business.

Speaking of which, even after consulting the records in the library they hadn’t found anything about the fabled ‘Chamber of Secrets’ so far. They had decided to take a small break in their search to focus on the more urgent stuff like their training and completion of the rituals. Maybe they would find a new angle to look at when they let it be for a bit. Both Harry and Hermione were staying at Hogwarts during the holiday as Hermione’s parents were abroad for a convention. Though she was a bit sad that she wouldn’t see her parents at Christmas Hermione was nonetheless happy she could

spend Christmas with her best friend and decided to make the best out of it. She also knew that the holiday's was a difficult time for Harry, he tried to hide it but she knew him better than anyone and was able to see how much he envied others that were capable of celebrating with their families. She vowed to ask her parents if he could join them next year, that way he would know how it was to spend time with family.

The holidays had started wonderfully to both Harry and Hermione, first they had already finished their homework resulting in a lot of free time and secondly they would be able to get a lot of work done now since most people went home for the holidays. After saying goodbye to their friends they started planning their days so they wouldn't lose too much time. They had decided to do at least three 'Bone-strengthening' rituals choosing the upper-arm, shoulders and skull as the bones they wished to strengthen this time. They would also start on discussing what kind of potions would be useful to start stockpiling and which ingredients they should start buying. After that they would make their first spell book, this would be a collection of all the spells they had learned or that they deemed important to learn. That night both of them left the common room under the invisibility cloak slowly and quietly walking towards the abandoned classroom they had found several days earlier. This room was even further away that the other room they had used before so they were more or less assured no one would find them.

"All right let's get busy. I'll seal the door and set up a perimeter ward while you start on drawing the necessary runes." Hermione ordered. Harry didn't need to be told twice and started without protest.

Ten minutes later Hermione joined him in drawing the runes and a few minutes later they were ready to begin. Harry took off his shirt and Hermione did the same but she wore a sleeveless shirt underneath so that her upper-arms were accessible for the carving of the rune. After tracing the runes on their skin with a muggle pen Harry took out the ritual knife and started cutting the rune into his skin. Luckily the pain wasn't so bad and he finished without trouble, he then sat down in the middle of the rune that they had drawn on the floor and started reciting the spell. A blinding flash later and the ritual was completed, Harry got up and helped Hermione carve her runes

before she sat down as well. A blinding flash later she too got back up and joined Harry again.

The next place would be the shoulders and this posed to be a bit of a problem. They would have to help out each other to carve the runes into their skin. This wasn't a problem for Harry since he was already shirtless but Hermione would have to take off her shirt as well. Naturally both of them were embarrassed to say the least, first Hermione drew and carved the runes into Harry's shoulder blades and he underwent the ritual flawlessly. Now however both of them hesitated a little since it was Hermione's turn.

"Hermione, I'll turn around with my eyes closed while you take off your shirt. Use it to cover you and I'll take care of the runes okay?"

"Fine but you better not be peeking Harry James Potter or I'll kick your ass."

Harry quickly promised not to peek and turned around keeping his eyes shut until Hermione gave her ok to turn around again. With a bright red face he started drawing the runes before gently using the knife to cut them into her soft skin. Hermione was just as red as Harry was but they made it through the ritual just fine and after she got dressed again they continued working. The last bone they wanted to strengthen was the skull so both of them helped the other to draw and carve the runes before reciting the spells. When they were finished Hermione quickly undid the spell she had placed on the door while Harry erased the runes from the floor leaving no trace of magic being performed inside. After an eventless trip back to the common room they bid each other good night and went to bed both of them happy that thing had gone so well.

The next morning they wandered around the castle for a bit trying not to arouse any suspicion before they went to the library to check out some new book. They had been doing this for the past few months so Madam Pince wasn't surprised to see them check out several books at once. They had chosen books on potions and their uses since they would work on that part of their plan for the coming days. They would record their findings in the special journals that Harry had bought in

Diagon Alley; those journals were only accessible by themselves so their ideas and findings were safe.

“Okay Harry, what do you have in mind? What kind of potions do you think are important?”

“Well, I thought about it for a while and I come up with these. First there is ‘Veritaserum’, which as you know is a truth serum. We could use it to gain information and questioning.” Hermione nodded seeing the logic in that even though she knew that brewing that particular potion would be very difficult. “Next would be the ‘Polyjuice Potion’ which would allow us to take the forms of other people. Other than that I guess the most used potions like ‘sleepless potion’, ‘Headache Potion’ and the likes would be good to have around.”

“I was going to suggest those normal potions as well. Especially healing potions would be very good to have in stock. Another one is the ‘Pepper-up Potion’ and any nutrient potion there might be.” Hermione said nodding their head.

So they started on writing down the necessary ingredients as well as the brewing method for the more complicated ones in their journals. They had to figure out just how much they would need of each ingredient so that they wouldn’t come short of anything which took more time than they had thought. They also looked through the books in search for other useful potions and wrote down anything that seemed interesting. They found several potions that could be used in battle such as a potion that causes large burns or makes someone fall asleep. Those potions could be used for distraction or even to eliminate adversaries.

The holidays passed quickly for them as they were busy every day. Over the two weeks they had managed to start on their spell books, the book was divided into three categories. First there was the offensive spells such as the cutting spell ‘Diffindo’ and the stunning spell ‘Stupefy’, next came the defensive spells like shields and lastly came the medical section. They each wrote down the spells they liked and when they found one the other didn’t know they showed it and explained how it worked and what its purpose was. By the end of the holiday they had a large number of spells they could perform or

still had to learn. Still it had been an interesting search for the spells and they had learned a lot of new things as well. They had also performed the bone-strengthening ritual again and this time they had focused on the feet and legs. Overall they were very satisfied with their progress and were positive that by the end of the year they would be ready for the next stage of the plan. They hadn't searched for any clues on the Chamber of Secrets and now they were eager to start their research again. They would start researching old legends and stories later that week once school had started once again. Another thing they would research was what kind of creature would be capable of petrifying people however for the last few days they relaxed and spend some time in the common room just like any other student would and they enjoyed those few days off.

Thank you for reading. Like i said in the beginning AN it's a short chapter and I apologize for that. The next chapter will be released on Sunday 5th of October. See you all then. Bye.

Chapter 12: A realization and a discovery

All too soon Hogwarts was once again filled with students who were eagerly telling their friends about their holidays and about the presents they got for Christmas. For the past few days Harry and Hermione had been enjoying the peace and quiet that came with the almost empty castle. Harry thought it was great that he could walk around freely without being pointed at or being talked about but even he had to admit that Hogwarts just didn't feel right without all the kids running around laughing and having fun. Hermione for her part was happy that Harry was feeling better. The holidays were a sensitive spot for him even now. It reminded him all too much that he didn't have his parents to celebrate with so she did her best to have Harry enjoy the festivities. She knew how much Harry appreciated her for staying with him even if he hadn't said it out loud.

They sat at the Gryffindor table and listened to their friends, adding a few stories of their own every now and then enjoying the meal worthy of Hogwarts. Ron was telling about his days at the Burrow and Harry was listening attentively; Ron could tell great stories even if he exaggerated most of the time. Still Harry loved to hear his stories about his family and how they celebrated Christmas together. When the headmaster stood up after most of the students had finished eating he welcomed them back and wished them a good second term. Not longer after that he dismissed them to their common rooms seeing they had class first thing in the morning.

"So what did you guys do? And please don't tell me you studied every day." Ron asked both Harry and Hermione.

"No Ron, we didn't study everyday! We did however do all our homework and prepared for classes but we also had a lot of fun exploring the castle didn't we Hermione?" Harry said.

Hermione nodded and they told Ron about how they searched the castle, scouted the library and had a great time trying to find secret passageways in Hogwarts. Ron groaned saying he too wanted to do that stuff and blamed them for not waiting for him. Harry then calmed him down by saying that there were still tons of things to discover about Hogwarts so they could do it again later on. That cheered him

up a little bit. Just then Ginny entered the room and Hermione called her over.

“Hey Ginny, how are you doing? How were the holidays?” Hermione asked the young girl. She knew Ginny hadn’t much friends and that Ron and her other brothers tended to ignore her a little.

“Fine I guess, it was nice spending some time with Mum and Dad.” Ginny shrugged. “I’m sorry Hermione; I’m really tired so I’m going to bed. Goodnight everyone.”

“Goodnight Ginny.” Harry and Hermione said. They watched her going up the stairs like she was dead on her feet. It looked like she had been running a marathon by the way she dragged herself. They realized something was wrong with the girl.

“Hey Ron, is Ginny alright?” Hermione asked concerned.

“What about Ginny? She’s fine, just tired. She’s been like that the whole time; Mum says she just homesick or something like that.” Ron said apparently not caring too much about his sister wellbeing.

“Aren’t you a least bit worried? She’s your little sister Ron!” Harry asked a little mad at Ron’s behavior.

“Relax Harry, she’ll be fine. I’ve known Ginny my whole life and she’s strong. She’ll get over it.” Ron said shrugging.

Hermione placed her hand on Harry’s arm to calm him down; she could see that Harry was annoyed at Ron and she certainly understood why. For people like her and Harry, who were only children, a little sister is someone who needed to be protected and cared about. Ron however didn’t seem to realize how lucky he was to have brothers and a sister. Harry felt her hand on his arm and he relaxed a little; while he didn’t understand how Ron could dismiss Ginny’s wellbeing so easily he figured that Ron wouldn’t talk like that if he knew she was in danger. He was sure Ron would fight for his little sister if push came to shove.

He thanked Hermione with a nod and went to get a book so he could read in front of the fire. That always calmed him down; the crackling of the wood, the dancing flames seemed to hypnotize him and he always liked the warmth better than the cold. He came back down seeing Hermione already sitting in their usual place and he sat down beside her. Opening his book at the page where he stopped reading he ignored Ron's comments about them reading again.

Now that school had started once again Harry and Hermione were severely restricted in their movements. No longer could they work openly in the common room like they did during the holidays. It bothered them in the beginning but after a few days they were used to sneaking around again. Of course having to endure Ron's nagging about helping with the homework he was supposed to do irked them to new levels.

Harry was looking at his special journal and started to double check some of the things they had completed. First of all, both he and Hermione had succeeded in strengthening more than half of the bones that they planned to strengthen so that was a very good start. Secondly, they had started on making a guidebook for their spells and potions that they would use later on in the war against Voldemort. The number of spells and potions would only increase in time but for now they had made an excellent effort. He marked the pages with a note that he would need to buy all the necessary ingredients as soon as possible. Most ingredients would be easy enough to get but a few of them were not only very expensive but also on the restricted list made by the ministry. He would have to find a way around that he figured.

Satisfied with their progress he placed his journal inside his trunk and sealed it. Even if the journal was protected with numerous protection spell he never let it laying around for anyone to see or find. While a student wouldn't be able to break the protections someone like Voldemort could and that would be a disaster. He closed the door to his room and went down to the common room where Hermione would be waiting for him. They didn't have class this afternoon and so they had decided to pick up the search for the 'Chamber of Secrets' once again. Hermione had noticed that there hadn't been any problem with the chamber or the monster during the holidays so she suspected

that a student was responsible. Now that everyone was back she was sure things would get messy again. Harry hoped she was wrong but had to agree with his friend's logic.

When they entered the library Hermione went straight to the shelf where the books on myths and legends from the Wizarding world were located. Harry however went to the section on magical beasts so he could do some research to find out what kind of creature could petrify people. They browsed around for a few minutes before sitting down at their usual table. Neither said a word as they were too engrossed in the books they had chosen.

Hermione took a fairly recent book about the most popular myths and legends called 'The truth behind myth and legend' and it proved to be very interesting. She didn't find anything remotely connected to the chamber of secrets but she did read some interesting stuff. If the Muggles knew that 'the monster of Loch Ness' was nothing more than a Sea Dragon they would be shocked. Of course then she remembered that to a Muggle a Sea Dragon was already amazing enough. Some of the other well known Muggle fantasy stories all had an origin in the Wizarding world so she was kind of surprised that the Muggles hadn't found out about magic and the world that was hidden from them.

Harry too was busy reading and some of the creatures he read about were frightening to him. The thought of having your skin ripped off your body by some of them didn't sound very appealing to him. Some of the entries though did surprise him a bit. For example he didn't believe a werewolf was an evil monster that this book made out to be. Sure they were very dangerous during full moon but every other day they were just human like the rest of them. There were sure to be some very nice and good people amongst them he thought.

"Find anything yet?" Hermione whispered to him.

"No, not yet. You?" Harry answered.

"Nothing related to what we're looking for." Hermione sighed. Harry nodded and took out a piece of paper and his muggle and started

scribbling something down. Hermione watched him and scooted closer to him so she could see what he was writing.

“Alright, let’s think this through.” Harry quietly said. “First of all, the monster should be able to live for a very long time since nobody’s there to take care of it. Secondly, it’s able to at least petrify people so it’s safe to say it’s capable of killing as well.” Harry wrote down.

“Yes also there should be a connection between the monster and Slytherin.” Hermione added.

“Good thinking Hermione.” Harry said writing that part down as well. “Okay, the only animal that I can see related to Slytherin is a snake.”

“Harry! That’s it.” Hermione gasped. “How could we be so stupid?”

“What? I don’t follow you.” Harry asked her.

“Think about it Harry. Everything about Slytherin screams ‘snakes’. It’s their house symbol, the name comes from a person said to be able to speak with snakes and they’re said to be as sneaky as a snake.” Hermione explained.

“Of course! There’s no way someone like Salazar Slytherin would use anything else than a snake to protect and guard his secret.” Harry understood suddenly. Hermione leaned closer and grabbed the book Harry had been reading. She quickly went through the pages until she came to part dedicated to snakes and snake-like creatures.

“Harry, look at this.” Hermione said showing him a page. “A Basilisk is seen as the King of snakes thanks to its life-span that can last several hundred years and its ability to kill people with a single look. The eyes of a basilisk bring death to all those who see them. The basilisk is highly resistant to magic thanks to its thick scales. Also the venom that the Basilisk produces is one of the most lethal in the known world. The only known weakness of the basilisk is the crow of a rooster.”

“That sounds like a creature someone like Salazar Slytherin would use.” Harry nodded. “Though it says here that the basilisk kills by looking at its victim. Nobody has been killed only petrified.”

“True but maybe that’s because it’s old. Maybe its magical power has been diminished by age?” Hermione said.

“That’s possible. Nonetheless this is a dangerous creature. The thought of something like this running around in a school full of children is not a pleasant one.” Harry admitted.

“Yeah, it’s only a matter of time before someone does get killed.” Hermione whispered back.

“Okay, now the only thing left to do is find the chamber and kill the basilisk.” Harry said to her.

“You make it sound like it’s an easy and everyday task.” Hermione snorted.

“Well, between vanishing Dark Lord’s, trolls and preparing for war, what is defeating a basilisk?” Harry smiled.

“When you put it that way it does seem a little insignificant.” Hermione agreed.

Since there was nothing left to do in the library the duo left shortly after. They had already searched the library for any information about the chamber but had found absolutely nothing. Not even a single reference or hint was mentioned in the books. They wondered around the castle a bit thinking about what they just had discovered and what their next move would be. Before they could do anything about the basilisk they would have to know who controlled it, where they could find it and how to defeat it without risking their own lives in the progress.

They were startled out of their thoughts when someone came running around the corner straight into Harry knocking the wind out of him. Hermione helped both of them up only to see that it was little Ginny Weasley who had been running from something. Harry rubbed his sore stomach before addressing his attacker.

“Hi Ginny, how is it going?” He said still trying to catch his breath. To his surprise she didn’t answer and just ran past him and Hermione without saying a word.

“What’s her problem?” he asked Hermione.

“I don’t know but she has been crying. I saw her face and it looked like she had been crying for some time.” Hermione said a bit worried.

“What could have happened that made her cry like that?” Harry wondered as well.

“I don’t know but I’m going to find out.” Hermione said determined.

Seeing that Ginny was already long gone Hermione said that she would try to take Ginny apart and try talking to her. She hoped that Ginny would be comfortable enough around her to tell her what is going on. They weren’t the best of friends but they got along fine as long as Ginny didn’t started asking questions about Harry. Hermione knew how much Ginny was fascinated with Harry and found it a little creepy to say the least.

It took Hermione a few days before she managed to get Ginny alone so she could speak to her. If Hermione was any more suspicious she would start to think that Ginny was evading her on purpose. Whenever she tried to speak with her she walked about saying she was busy or she started talking to one of her classmates. It was driving Hermione up the walls. She finally cornered Ginny when she went to the bathroom.

“Hey Ginny, how are you doing?” Hermione asked innocently.

“Euh fine I guess. How about you?” Ginny shrugged.

“I’m doing okay thanks. Ginny, a few days ago you ran into Harry and I noticed that you had been crying.” She said getting straight to the point. “Are you sure everything is alright?”

“I’m fine Hermione, I wasn’t feeling so well and I missed home. That’s all.” Ginny quickly said.

“Are you sure? Because maybe I can help you with whatever problem you have.” Hermione said gently. “We’re friends right?”

“I told you I’m fine Hermione. Now please let it go and I’ll be fine.” Ginny said angrily before storming out of the girl’s bathroom.

When she told Harry what happened he agreed that something was wrong with the smallest Weasley. He figured that maybe she was being bullied or something so they decided to keep a close eye on her in case they needed to help her out. While Harry didn’t know Ginny Weasley that well he hated bullies and wouldn’t stand for it when he could do something about it. Hermione too had her share of problems with bullies when she was little so she too hated them with a passion. From now on Ginny could count on her to protect her.

Well, here we are. The end of another chapter. How was it?

I think that if Hermione and Harry sat down and thought about the whole chamber of secrets thing that they would come up with what I wrote. The connection between Slytherin and snake is obvious so they should be able to figure out that the monster is a snake.

Now that Harry and Hermione have noticed that Ginny is acting weird they will be paying close attention to her so things will unravel fast. Keep tuned for the next chapter. I will try to post the next chapter on October 19th but if I’m not satisfied with what I’ve written it will be posted on November 2th. See you guys then.

Chapter 13: The diary

Over the next few days and weeks both Harry and Hermione kept a close look over Ginny. What they instantly noticed was that she didn't have much friends and she mostly spend the day alone. She didn't hang out with her classmates or other students and while they were friendly and willing to accept her into their group Ginny seemed to refuse every time they asked her to join them. Ginny also spent a lot of time in the library seated in the far corner where she was practically invisible for all the other students. Hermione was very worried for the redheaded girl; that kind of behavior just isn't normal for a young girl.

"I'm telling you Harry that Ginny is in serious trouble." Hermione whispered to him.

"You don't have to tell me that 'Mione I know." Harry nodded. "At first I thought she was having trouble with a bully or something but we know that's not it."

"Seriously, all she does is writing in that diary of hers. Something is very wrong here." Hermione said.

"I wish I could talk to her but she runs as soon as I come close." Harry frowned at saying that.

"You can't blame her Harry; she has a major crush on you. You're the man of her dreams." Hermione grinned at him.

"Sorry to disappoint her then but I'm nothing like the hero she thinks I am." Harry shrugged. He knew about Ginny's infatuation with him and he blamed all those stupid made up stories that excited in the Wizarding world.

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, we need to figure out what's wrong with her." Hermione said with a smile before turning serious again. "If only we could get a hold of her diary then maybe we could get an idea what is going on with her."

“Hermione, you’re not planning to steal her diary are you?” Harry said appalled. To him a person’s diary is sacred and nobody has the right to read it without the owner’s permission.

“I just don’t know. I mean, this is driving me crazy.” Hermione sighed. She wasn’t really serious but still it was a valid thought.

“We’ll just have to keep watching her.” Harry shrugged. “One day we’ll find out what is going on but until that day we need to be careful and concentrate on our goals.”

“I guess so.” Hermione nodded sadly.

The rest of the day both of the teenagers went over their accomplishments. Last week they had performed another ritual on strengthening their bones. They had finished the upper body and would now start on the bones in the lower body starting with the hips and upper legs. Things were going great in that department and Harry was sure that they would complete the goal of strengthening their entire body before the end of the school year. Their other project, the animagus transformation however wasn’t going that well. They meditated every day but neither of them had any success at discovering their animagus form. Luckily the book had told them that this process could take months if not years to complete otherwise they would have given up on it already. Also the usefulness of having a animagus form helped them keep motivated.

For the next few weeks nothing major happened at Hogwarts; the children went to their classes and complained about the amount of homework they got, gossiped about their classmates or talked about the Quidditch scores. For Harry and Hermione however homework wasn’t a problem thanks to the fact that they had more than enough time thanks to their sleep reducing ritual. It gave them time to continue their other projects; and they used this time very well. Nonetheless both of them were getting frustrated with Ginny and their incapability to get her to talk about what was wrong. They had started following her more and more and they started to notice some very disturbing facts. It seemed like she knew they were on her tail and each time they managed to get her alone she disappeared soon after. They decided to go a step further and try to get to read her diary; they

both knew that this was a violation of her privacy but they both thought that something was seriously wrong with the redheaded girl. The only problem was that she always carried the damn thing with her and never let it out of her sight. It looked like she was very afraid that someone might steal it or read what she had written inside it.

"Any ideas how we can get our hands on her diary?" Harry asked his partner.

"No, it's impossible to get it without her knowing it." Hermione sighed. "It's like she obsessed with it. It's just not normal."

"I agree; she's like a mother lion to her cubs." Harry said. "Okay let's follow her for a few more days but we'll use my cloak. That way she can't see us and maybe we'll get lucky."

"Okay but after that we'll bring out the big guns." Hermione nodded.

"The big guns?" Harry said raising an eyebrow. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that I'll stun her and you grab the diary from her hands?" Hermione shrugged like it was nothing.

"Hermione, we can't do that!" Harry said appalled that his best friend would do such a thing.

"I know its drastic Harry but you and I know something is wrong with her. This might be the only way to find out." Hermione admitted.

"Let's keep that option for last shall we?" Harry agreed knowing she was right.

It wasn't until the end of February that things went bad once again. There hadn't been any attack since last time and people were already starting to forget it had happened at all. Only the teachers and some students who were really interested in the legend of the Chamber of secrets kept taking the threat serious. So when the next attack finally came most students were shocked and scared beyond belief. It had been a third year who had come upon the petrified forms of Nearly

headless Nick and Justin Finch-Fletchley. Coincidentally both Harry and Hermione weren't far when they heard the girl screaming her lungs out and they rushed to the rescue. When they arrived they instantly knew what had happened; it wasn't all that hard to figure out when you saw the terrified look on the ghost face. It portrayed Nick like he had stared Death straight in the eye and that was saying something seeing Nick was the Gryffindor ghost. Justin on the other hand was lying a bit away from Nick with a shocked look his face.

It didn't take long for the teachers to arrive and soon the whole hallway was filled with students trying to get a peek. They were quickly shooed away by Professor Snape who threatened them with a month of detention in the dungeon cleaning out cauldrons. Needless to say that none of the students wanted to be submitted to a torture like that making them flee the area. Harry and Hermione however kept an eye on Ginny; the poor girl was crying her eyes out and was shaking badly. It seemed strange to them since Ginny wasn't exactly friends with Justin so why was she so upset? Before they could ask her however she ran upstairs to her dorm and stayed there for the rest of the night. It did however confirm both Harry's and Hermione's suspicion that something was going on with the girl.

The next morning they followed her outside and watched as she started writing in her dairy. What seemed strange to them is that Ginny never turned a page no matter how much she wrote. Also judging from her facial expressions it seemed like she was talking to someone instead of writing her thoughts down. It was almost like she was arguing with the dairy which made no sense at all to Harry and Hermione.

"What kind of diary is she using?" Harry whispered.

"I don't know but I never heard of a dairy where you don't have to turn pages or that seems to answer to what you write." Hermione said equally quiet.

Their conversation was cut short when they saw Ginny storm out of the garden. They quickly followed her inside trying not to get noticed but thanks to Harry's invisibility cloak they didn't have to worry too much. Ginny ran as fast as she possibly could and slammed the door

to the girls' toilet open. Not wasting any time she just threw the diary away and without looking back stormed back out almost running into her pursuers.

"What was that all about?" Harry said after entering the toilet.

"Don't know but she wasn't carrying the diary when she left this place so it must still be here." Hermione said while looking at the different booths.

Harry nodded and he too started searching for the diary. He did look at the strange markings on the washing place in the middle of the room. It seemed somewhat out of place and very old. He didn't think anything special of it until he saw the image of a small snake on one of the faucets. He went for a closer look and saw that none of the other faucets had the same serpent. He was about to call out Hermione when he heard her yell that she had found the diary.

"Harry, I got it. She threw it in one of the toilets." Hermione said excited but she noticed that Harry seemed distracted. "What's wrong?"

"Look at this." He said while pointing at the faucet.

"That's weird; a snake engraved on the faucet." Hermione said after taking a closer look. "What do you think it means?"

"I don't know but I wonder if it has something to do with Slytherin?" Harry answered. "We know the man was obsessed with snakes and their meaning."

"Let's leave it for now and focus on the diary." Hermione said knowing Harry was right but right now she wanted to examine the diary and figure out what made Ginny throw it away after keeping it for so long.

Harry was about to answer her when he saw something rise from the toilet behind Hermione and pointed at it making Hermione turn around. By now the whole figure had taking shape and Harry could clearly see that it was a ghost. It was a young girl maybe around fourteen or fifteen years old carrying large black glasses and looking

very depressed and unhappy. When she noticed Harry she immediately started yelling at him.

“What is a boy doing in a girl’s toilet? You can’t be here.” She wailed loudly. Harry winced at the sound of her high pitched voice as it made his ears hurt.

“Calm down Myrtle. It’s just Harry; you met him before don’t you remember?” Hermione said trying to get the ghost to calm down. “Harry you remember Moaning Myrtle right? She lives in this toilet.”

“Euh, nice seeing you again Myrtle.” Harry said gently. “I haven’t seen you around much. Don’t you have any friends amongst the other ghosts?” He was trying to get on her good side by showing some interest but this had the opposite result as she started crying and wailing all over again.

“Of course i don’t have any friends; nobody want to know Moaning Myrtle; she’s only been dead for about fifty years so why would they be friends with her” She yelled out. “Nobody ever cared about ugly, little, moaning Myrtle.” And before Harry could apologize she dove back into the toilet and disappeared.

“Was it something I said?” Harry asked astonished.

“Don’t worry about it Harry; Myrtle is very sensitive about her death. She haunts this toilet and yells at everyone who comes in here.” Hermione said. “That’s way not many girls use this bathroom.”

“Weird. Anyway let’s get out of here and tonight we can take a look at the diary.” Harry shrugged at the ghost behavior.

The next few hours went painfully slow to both Harry and Hermione as they were both very curious to open the diary but they had to wait until the common room was empty. It wouldn’t do for Ginny to find out that they had found her diary after all. Hermione had the most problems as she was curious by nature and it showed; she couldn’t seem to relax for even five minutes. Harry was also curious but he managed to keep his emotions under control for the time being. He decided to read a bit in one of his books that he had bought in Diagon

Alley and when Hermione asked him if he had another book for her to read he happily went to his dorm and fetched a book for her.

One by one the Gryffindor students went upstairs and when finally the last student had gone up the stairs Hermione let out a loud sigh; she had been waiting for hours and her patience was at an end. Harry chuckled at seeing his friend this frustrated but had to admit that he too was glad that they were alone. After making sure they were the only ones left he raced to his room and quietly took out the diary from his trunk. Once he came back down he wasn't surprised that Hermione jumped up and snatched it out of his hands. They went to sit at a table and opened the diary only to see that nothing was writing in it.

"Turn the page Hermione maybe she skipped the first page?" Harry said softly. Hermione nodded and turned the page only to see another white page with nothing written on it. Page after page she turned but she didn't find anything.

"What is the meaning of this? We clearly saw her writing and yet all we find is empty pages." Hermione said disappointed.

"There has to be something. Maybe it's protected?" Harry argued remembering his own journals that he had bought.

"I don't think so; our journals are impossible to even open without the password not to mention all the other protections." Hermione said shaking her head. She watched as Harry took a quill and started writing something in the diary before she could stop him. To her amazement and Harry's as well his sentence disappeared right after Harry was finished writing. Before she could comment on it however a message appeared on the page.

'Hello Harry Potter and Hermione Granger, my name is Tom Riddle.'

Oh cliffhanger. I'm evil I know but it seemed like a good way to end the chapter. I've been having some good ideas lately so I hope that I'm done with having problems writing this part of my story. Anyway see you guys soon with the next chapter of this story. I hope to be able to release it in two weeks just like usual. See you guys then.

Chapter 14: A view of the past

If Harry and Hermione were shocked that the book replied they didn't show it; that didn't mean that they didn't understand things a little better. If this diary could answer your questions or comment on what you wrote than it explained how Ginny seemed to argue while writing her feelings down. They wondered what this diary had told her but they knew better than to ask about it. The diary probably wouldn't reveal anything about what Ginny had written anyway. Harry nodded at Hermione and grabbed the quill to write something down again.

'It's nice meeting you Mr. Riddle.' Harry wrote quickly.

'Just Tom is fine. No need for formality.' Appeared on the page.

'Thanks; could you explain how this diary works?' Harry wrote after Hermione ordered him to ask that question.

'I'm afraid I can't; you see I'm just a memory placed inside this diary'

'So you were a student here at Hogwarts?' Hermione wrote after taking the quill from Harry.

'That's correct; I was a student here about fifty years ago.'

"Harry, maybe we should ask it if he ever heard of the chamber. Surely other people have used this diary before." Hermione suddenly said. Harry nodded and wrote down the question; for a long time nothing appeared on the page and they started to think that it didn't know anything but then a message appeared.

'How about I show you?'

"Show us? How?" Hermione wondered. But before they could write down anything the pages started to turn and all of the sudden they felt like they were being pulled into the diary. The whole world seemed to turn and twist around them and they were getting worried but as sudden as it begun it stopped and now they were standing in a hallway. They looked around and recognized the place as Hogwarts,

they started walking around very carefully trying not to get noticed when they heard voices from around the corner. They move closer and listened to the conversation.

“Prof. Dumbledore, did you talk to Headmaster Dippet about my inquiry?” A handsome young man asked. Harry and Hermione were shocked to see a much younger Dumbledore though they could definitely that it was him. He wore the same type of clothes and he had a white beard though it was as long as it was in the present day.

“I have talk to the headmaster Mr. Riddle but it is as I told you before I’m afraid.” Dumbledore said softly.

“So there’s no way I can stay here over the summer? I really have to return to the orphanage?” The now identified Tom said sounding very disappointed.

“I know you dislike the orphanage Tom but there’s no other choice as Hogwarts cannot house students over the summer.” Dumbledore said seeing how one of the best students in the last decades was feeling.

“But what about these attacks? I have heard rumors that the school might be closing; is this true?” Tom asked. The thought of having to return for the summer was bad enough but if he had to return to that dammed orphanage several months before it would be pure hell in his opinion.

“It’s mysterious how fast news travels around here but I’m afraid those rumors are correct.” Dumbledore sighed. “A young student died Tom; we cannot allow other students to be in danger.”

“So if the attacks stopped then the school would stay open?” Tom asked again.

“I suppose that if we find the culprit who did this then yes the school would stay open.” Dumbledore nodded. “Why these question young Tom? Do you have any idea who might have done this?”

“Oh no sir, I’m just curious. I really don’t want to return to the orphanage so I hope I might be able to help with finding whoever did this.”

“Please don’t do anything foolish Tom.” Dumbledore warned him. “Whoever did this is very dangerous and isn’t something you should worry about. Let us teacher handle this problem. Now, I think it’s about time you returned to your dorm.”

“Of course Professor and thank you for asking the headmaster.” Tom said politely before bidding his teacher goodnight.

Tom walked towards Harry and Hermione who tried to hide themselves from him but apparently they were invisible to him as he passed right next to him without any sign of seeing them. Knowing that the boy knew something about the chamber they quickly raced after him. They followed him as he walked through the corridors and though it seemed that he was just taking a walk they could see that he had a destination in mind. He went down to one of the lower levels of Hogwarts and had Hermione and Harry seen his face they would have noticed the evil smile he was wearing. All of the sudden he stopped and turned and for a second Harry and Hermione thought he had seen them but relaxed when he walked through them again towards what seemed to be an abandoned classroom. He sneaked closer to the door careful not to make a sound. After listening for a moment he pushed the door open and entered the classroom with both of Harry and Hermione on his heels. When they entered the room they saw something that they never thought possible.

“It’s over Hagrid. I’m sorry but I can’t let you continue this.” Tom spoke with authority.

“Tom, you scared me there. This isn’t what you think.” The much younger and smaller Hagrid stammered while stepping in front of a large chest as if he wanted to protect whatever was inside.

“I know what you’ve been doing and now a young girl is dead because of it. They’re threatening to close down the school and I won’t let that happen.” Tom said advancing a few steps.

"No, you're wrong. Aragog never hurt anyone I swear." Hagrid said defending whatever he was hiding.

"That monster can't be allowed to roam free Hagrid." Tom said taking out his wand but before he could usher a spell the chest opened and something jumped out before disappearing. It was so fast that neither Harry nor Hermione had seen what it was.

"Aragog isn't a monster." Hagrid said still defending what Harry thought was his friend.

After that the world started spinning and turning again and they knew that the memory was over. With a deep breath they seemed to wake up in the real world once again. Both of them were shocked at what they had seen; they had revisited the past and seen the experiences of a young wizard named Tom Riddle. It seemed unbelievable for such a thing to be possible but neither of them could deny it. After a few minutes of silent thinking Harry voiced his opinion.

"I don't believe for one second that Hagrid would be capable of such a thing." He said strongly. He liked the man; he was friendly and always treated everyone with respect.

"You're right Harry. Hagrid isn't the kind of man that would unleash a basilisk into a school." Hermione agreed. She liked Hagrid as well even with the man's obsession with strange and sometimes dangerous animals.

"Let's go see him in the morning and ask him what happened afterwards." Harry said.

"I think we already know what happened, Harry." Hermione said a bit sad. "Remember when Hagrid told us that he was expelled from Hogwarts?"

"Of course; how stupid of me. They must have believed Tom and blamed Hagrid for the death of that student." Harry said catching up. "Poor Hagrid, punished for something he didn't do."

“Yeah but I can’t help wondering what he was hiding in that chest.” Hermione admitted.

“Well we can ask him tomorrow.” Harry said before picking up the diary and wishing Hermione good night. Once he got to his room he carefully put the diary in his trunk sealing it shut.

When the morning came the two second year students didn’t waste any time and left straight after breakfast to go see their friend. Now that they thought about it they hadn’t seen him in a few weeks and it worried them. They put on their cloaks as it was still rather chilly this time of year and traveled down the path towards Hagrid’s hut. It was a path they had taken many times before so they knew where to pay attention not to trip on one of the stones or holes. They saw his cabin in the distance and noticed that there was smoke coming out of the chimney so they knew he was home. They banged on the door and heard Fang bark loudly before Hagrid calmed him down and opened the door.

“Harry, Hermione what are you two doing here?” he asked surprised motioning to get inside out of the cold.

“We came to see you of course.” Harry said warming his hands near the fire. “We haven’t seen you lately so we were worried.”

“That’s very nice of you but I’m fine.” Hagrid said offering some tea and some of his own home-made biscuits. Both Harry and Hermione accepted the tea but passed on the biscuit arguing that they just had breakfast.

“Hagrid, can we ask you a question?” Hermione asked carefully.

“Of course you can Hermione. Fire away.” Hagrid said laughing.

“Why were you expelled from Hogwarts?” She asked boldly. Hagrid’s face changed from cheery to depressed and ashamed.

“Well, you sure know how to pick your questions don’t you Hermione?” Hagrid said sadly.

“We really want to know Hagrid.” Harry said encouraging his friend. “Maybe we can help you.”

“I suppose it won’t change all that much if I told you.” Hagrid sighed before he started telling how he got accused of doing something really bad by a fellow student. Not only was he innocent but people even refused to believe him seeing as it was his word against that of one of the best students at the time. He told them that the headmaster had no choice but to expel him but how Prof. Dumbledore had managed to get him a job; the very same job he was still doing today.

“So you didn’t open the chamber of secrets?” Hermione asked just to confirm what they already knew.

“Of course not, I’m innocent I swear.” Hagrid all but shouted.

“Relax Hagrid, we believe you.” Harry said calming him down. “But if it wasn’t the monster that killed that girl that you were hiding, then what were you hiding?”

“Oh that.” Hagrid said nervously. “That was just my friend Aragog. He’s an Acromantula I found near the forbidden forest. I raised him but when Tom accused us of killing that girl he ran away. He lives in the forest now with his family.”

Both of the youngsters gulped deeply; Acromantulas were vicious spiders that could grow to enormous sizes and who feared nothing. They hunt down everything they see and one colony could exist out of thousands of them. To think that such creatures lived in the forbidden forest this close to a school full of children wasn’t exactly reassuring. They shook their head at how Hagrid always seemed to such dangerous and weird pets. They figured that there was nothing they could do about it and secretly vowed never to enter the forest unless it was absolutely necessary. They switched the conversation to other matters and stayed for a while chatting happily with Hagrid. After several hours they finally said their goodbyes and promised to visit him again soon.

They walked back to the castle in silence knowing that they couldn't discuss what they had discovered; they knew that they might get overheard by anyone so they would have to wait until the evening to talk about it. When they entered the Gryffindor common room they quietly sat down and pretended to be working on their homework or just reading. It seemed that it would be a uneventful day but Ginny came down from her dorm looking very anxious and nervous. She sat down on one of the desks but couldn't relax for even a minute.

"Ginny, are you okay?" Hermione asked concerned.

"What? Oh yeah I'm fine Hermione; I just lost my diary that's all." Ginny said smiling a bit. Hermione could see however that the smile was forced and not spontaneous.

"Where did you last see it? I'll help you look if you want?" Hermione offered her.

"No that's okay, I'm sure it will turn up somewhere." Ginny said hastily.

"Okay, let me know if you change your mind." Hermione said before returning to her homework.

Over the next few days Ginny seemed more and more agitated and sometimes very angry as she was unable to find her diary. Not only that but her health seemed to deteriorate as well, she didn't eat much and she was very pale. Frankly Harry and Hermione started to get very worried about her wellbeing. They kept an eye on her in case things got worse but it seemed that losing her diary had a very bad effect on her. Tonight Harry and Hermione were discussing what they should do with Ginny and the diary.

"Ginny is getting worse every day." Hermione said softly.

"Yeah, it's almost like she's a drug addict that couldn't get her fix on time." Harry nodded.

"And the diary is her drug." Hermione added agreeing with him. "What are we going to do? If this goes on her life might be in danger."

"I'm afraid we don't have much choice." Harry sighed. "We have to give back that diary."

"But what about the diary?" Hermione argued. "We know that it's dangerous and that somehow this Tom Riddle is involved. He showed us that memory trying to convince us that Hagrid killed that girl fifty years ago."

"I know 'Mione but we don't have a choice." Harry said sadly. "Look, we either give back the diary and keep a very close watch on Ginny or we keep it and watch her getting sicker and sicker."

"I guess you're right, we can't risk Ginny's life like this." Hermione agreed. "But we follow her as much as we can. She's just being manipulated by this Riddle guy I'm sure of it."

"I agree; okay let's recap everything we discovered so far." Harry said taking out his journal. A part of it had been used to write down every piece of information they had come across in this case. They went over everything from the very beginning until Hagrid's recollection of his expulsion. There were still several unresolved mysteries like the location of the Chamber, how to get inside and who was the girl that got killed all those years ago? When Harry read that last part he realized that they had known the girl all along and he slapped himself in the face.

"Oh my god Hermione, we're such idiots." Harry groaned.

"Huh? What do you mean by that?" Hermione said not knowing what he meant.

"Look at this." He said showing her the question mark next to the question about the girl who died. "Which ghost that we know died about fifty years ago? Who is the youngest ghost in Hogwarts?"

"I don't see how that's....." Hermione started until she pieced it together. "Moaning Myrtle!" she exclaimed.

"Last time we saw her she yelled at us that because she died about fifty years ago so the other ghosts aren't including her." Harry said

nodding. "I'll bet you that she's the girl who died when the chamber was opened. She must have seen the basilisk and died in that very toilet she still haunts today."

"You're right; she has to be that girl." Hermione said excited. "We should ask her what happened."

"I don't think that's going to work 'Mione." Harry sighed again. "Didn't you say that she was very traumatized by her death?"

"Oh yeah; she flees as soon someone mentions it." Hermione said a bit disappointed. "But that doesn't mean we can't try."

"True." Harry admitted.

"Okay back to Ginny and the diary." Hermione said. "How do we give it back? I mean, we can't just go up to her and give it back can we? She'll know that we took it."

"We'll just say we found it while taking a walk outside. Besides I don't think the diary can discuss what other people wrote; remember that it didn't answer any questions about Ginny?"

"Fine; we'll give it back tomorrow. I don't think it would be wise to wait much longer." Hermione said.

"Very well; for now let's get some sleep. I have a feeling that the next few days will be very tiresome." Harry said yawning a bit.

Well, that's it for this chapter. Let me know how it was okay. Next chapter should be out on schedule so in two weeks from now. See you all then.

Chapter 15: Harry's rant and success

The next morning Harry and Hermione woke up a bit earlier so they could make a small walk outside. This would ensure their little lie to Ginny would be reinforced; Harry had the diary in his pocket and together they left the common room as planned. They made sure that several students saw them leaving as well. As they walked to the lake they discussed their classes for the day and their homework that they still had to finish. After spending about half an hour outside they made their way back to the castle and pretended to find the diary just outside the gate in the small bush. Harry even dragged it a bit through the dirt so it would look like it had been there for several days. Nodding to each other they went to the great hall to have breakfast.

As was usual for the past few days they didn't see Ginny at breakfast so they would have to wait until later that day. They talked to Ron about her condition and even he had to admit that something was going on with his little sister. He even said that he and the twins had tried talking to her but she refused to tell what was going on. Ron told them that he was thinking about writing to his mum so that maybe she could figure out what was happening. Harry and Hermione were shocked to see Ron caring about his little sister that much since at first he didn't seem too concerned and their opinion of him just went up a little.

Not wanting him to worry too much they assured him that Ginny would be fine but that maybe she just needed a little bit more time to adjust. They also told him that she was having trouble finding friends at the beginning of the year and that maybe she was just lonely. Ron seemed to accept that statement and promised to keep her some company from now on. After breakfast classes started and they needed to pay attention to the professors so they stopped thinking about Ginny for the time being. It wasn't until after they had dinner that they managed to get Ginny somewhat separated from the rest and that they could give her the diary back. Of course it was only Hermione that talked to her since Ginny was too nervous to talk with Harry around.

“Oh my god thank you so much Hermione. Where did you find it? I looked everywhere.” Ginny said happily.

“Harry and I found it this morning after our walk.” Hermione explained. “We knew how important it was to you so here you are.”

“D-Did you write in it?” Ginny asked uncertain.

“Of course not. This is yours Ginny. We wouldn’t do something like that.” Hermione lied smoothly. She felt a little bad about it but it couldn’t be helped.

From the moment Ginny got her diary back her condition seemed to be getting better; she wasn’t as pale anymore and she started eating properly again. They kept a close watch on her but nothing seemed to indicate that she was being controlled. On the contrary she laughed more and talked a lot more with her classmates. Harry and Hermione weren’t fooled however and knew that it was only a matter of time before she would start acting strange again. Whatever that seemed to manipulate her probably realized that Ginny was acting too suspicious and wanted things to cool down a little bit before starting things up again.

On the other side of the castle however things weren’t so peaceful. With the new victim being petrified Dumbledore had come under scrutiny from the Hogwarts Board of Governors and they were holding him responsible for not solving the problem. That’s why Lucius Malfoy was currently standing in front of the Headmaster with a big grin on his face. It was a known fact that Malfoy had served Voldemort during his reign but he had escaped conviction by pleading that he was under the Imperious Curse. Thanks to several large donations he got off with just a slap on the wrist. Malfoy also didn’t hesitate to bribe those who could offer him something he wanted nor did he hesitate to use force. Thanks to his large bank accounts and his status as a pureblood family he was a member of the board and even though most of the other would deny it he had most of them in his pocket.

"You can't be serious Mr. Malfoy." Minerva McGonagall said sternly. "If you remove the Headmaster from Hogwarts then things will only get worse."

"My dear, do not worry about that. The board will take matters into their own hands and deal with this problem soon enough." Lucius smirked. "No, Dumbledore you have been in charge long enough and look where it got us. Several students petrified and you still have no solution or clue who did all this."

"Lucius, I'm doing the best I can." Dumbledore said from his chair. "This isn't some prank or mischief we're talking about."

"Nonsense Dumbledore, I've been saying it for years but it seems others have started to realize it as well." Malfoy sneered. "You're getting old and clearly you're not capable of doing your job anymore."

"How dare you insult Prof. Dumbledore in such a manner?" McGonagall shrieked loudly.

"Calm down Minerva. Do not let him get under your skin." Dumbledore said while raising his hands to calm his deputy-headmistress down. "Now Lucius, even you can't just dismiss me of my duties like that."

"You're right and that's why I have gathered a petition from the board." Malfoy grinned cruelly. "And guess what? Each of them signed in favor for your resignation."

"I see; very well if that is the will of the board I will of course obey." Dumbledore sighed. "But I feel it necessary to say that you're making a big mistake."

"You have until tomorrow to clear out your office." Malfoy said before turning his back to Dumbledore and left the office.

"Albus, you can't be serious! What will happen to us when you're not around?" McGonagall said worried.

“Do not fret Minerva. I’m absolutely positive that things will work out eventually.” He said from behind his desk. “I just hope that no one else has to suffer until we get everything fixed.”

“So do I Albus, so do I.” McGonagall said softly.

It didn’t take very long until the news of Dumbledore’s resignation was known by the whole castle. The shock that came with the news was not unexpected; Dumbledore was considered the most powerful wizard of their age and with him around the children felt safe no matter what happened. Owls were sent home with letters telling their parents of the news hoping that they would return with good news or at least some advice on what to do next. Even the teachers were feeling the shock of not having Dumbledore around; it seemed that without the man most of the Wizarding world’s population appeared hopeless and weak. It was something that bothered Harry a bit; he respected the headmaster and thought of him as a great man with extraordinary powers and knowledge but he didn’t need his presence to be able to function. He had already seen how the Wizarding world seemed to focus on its heroes for guidance and safekeeping. Dumbledore because he defeated Grindelwald and Harry because he took care of Voldemort. This was a matter that he would have to research a bit closer in the future.

“Look at them Hermione, running around like the world is going to end without Dumbledore here.” Harry said that evening in the common room.

“You can’t blame them Harry. Professor Dumbledore had been the leader of the light for decades.” Hermione tried to explain to him. “He’s a beacon, a rock that they can depend on when things go bad.”

“But that’s just it ‘Mione.” Harry said. “Do you know how many witches and wizards there are in Britain?”

“If I had to guess I would say a couple thousand?” Hermione said not really knowing.

“There are about 15 000 witches and wizards, Hermione.” Harry said. “Do you know how big Voldemort’s army was at the peak of his reign?”

“Judging from your face a whole lot less than 15000?” Hermione said again not knowing the answer.

“From what I have found out by reading the newspapers out of those days the ministry convicted about 70 death-eaters; about 50 got killed during the war and about 20 used the excuse of being under the imperious curse.” Harry told her. “That makes about 200 people plus of course all those that weren’t captured or managed to stay unknown.”

“So let’s say 300 of them?” Hermione guessed.

“So 300 death-eaters against what? 10 000 grown up witches and wizards?” Harry said. “Why is it that Voldemort was winning the war when he was facing such overwhelming numbers?”

“I would think that most of them were afraid to confront them; most likely in fear of repercussions and the likes.” Hermione answered.

“You’re right; most of them were too scared to fight back and to a certain degree I can understand that.” Harry agreed. “But why were there only a few who had the guts to fight back. It’s because most of them were looking at Dumbledore to clean up the mess like he did with Grindelwald. Instead of helping him they turned to him as their savior once again. Of course there were hundreds of people who helped fight Voldemort but the most part of them were just waiting for Dumbledore to defeat Voldemort.”

“So you’re saying that they have fallen depended of their heroes instead of doing something of their own.” Hermione had to admit that what Harry was saying made sense. Voldemort and his Death-eaters were strong there was no doubt about that but if everyone fought back than no matter how strong he was he would have been defeated.

“Exactly and we have seen the proof of that today.” Harry said.

“So what can we do about that?” Hermione asked him.

“Oh don’t get me wrong ‘Mione. I don’t intend to do anything about it right now.” Harry said smiling. “Right now we use our time to get stronger and prepare ourselves. But it is something that we must take in account.”

“But Harry, we can’t defeat Voldemort with just the two of us.” Hermione said. “That would be just foolish.”

“Don’t worry ‘Mione. I’m not planning on keeping this a 2 man operation.” Harry said taking her hand to reassure her. “Once were up and running we can start searching for people to join us but for now it’s just the two of us.”

That seemed to satisfy Hermione for the time being. She was a little scared that Harry wouldn’t want to include anyone else but now that she heard his plans he relaxed. She shouldn’t have doubted her friend like this; she knew that he had big plans even if he didn’t tell her everything yet. It wasn’t a matter of trust it was just that he wasn’t finished planning everything in his head yet. Once that was done he would include her just like he always did.

The next morning however it became clear just how affected the school was without Dumbledore around. At breakfast dozen upon dozen owls returned with letters telling that if anything remotely dangerous happened they would be on the earliest train home. Even the parents felt that their children weren’t safe enough without the headmaster. Some kids even received ‘Howlers’ that yelled out to pack their bags and to come home as soon as possible. The teacher weren’t that shocked that there were parents who pulled their kids out of school as even they didn’t feel very safe at the moment. It was at that time that Lockhart stood up from his seat and stepped forward to address the crowd of students. After a quick ‘sonorus’ to amplify his voice he started his speech.

“Students, have no fear.” Lockhart said before giving his customary smile that normally made girls swoon on their feet. It seemed not to

work however as they were much too worried to care about that. "Though you might think that we're in great danger in the absence of our beloved Headmaster, I assure you that you're all quite safe. I will personally see to it that each and every one of you will be okay. You have the word of Gilderoy Lockhart." He finished in what he thought was an impressive stance wearing that stupid grin on his face.

Harry just groaned at the man; why couldn't the man take a hint? Thanks to his own stupid lessons and his ridiculous behavior almost nobody took him serious and now he compared himself to Dumbledore? The man might as well be an ant compared in magical power and knowledge. In the beginning of the year most of the students were looking forward to the man's classes but it didn't take long before they realized what a joke he truly was. Of course the fact that Harry didn't stop saying so didn't help the man's image either. Harry lost all appetite and told Hermione that he was going for a walk. Hermione nodded and quickly finished her glass of pumpkin juice so she could join him. Once outside they started talking and enjoying the cold but fresh air.

"Can you believe that faker?" Harry finally said.

"Yeah, I can't believe he can sprout lies like that without a hint of shame." Hermione nodded.

"Seriously, the man is just above a squib in power and he's standing there like he's the next Merlin." Harry continued his rant.

"Just let him be Harry, we know the truth that's what matters." Hermione said trying to calm him down. "Anyway are you ready for the next ritual?"

"Of course, not many bones left. Just the legs and feet." Harry said proudly. They had been making serious progress with the bone-strengthening ritual. They were almost finished with it and much sooner than they first had thought. Once that was over they could focus on other things like researching spells and making potions. Harry had several ideas that he wanted to try out but that would have to wait until they finished school. Now that the end of the school year was getting closer he couldn't help but be curious about the house he

had bought and what it would be like to have a place of his own. Of course he couldn't live there permanently yet but he would figure out a way somehow.

"Earth to Harry." Hermione said while waving her hand in front of him.

"Oh sorry 'Mione, I was thinking about the place I bought." Harry admitted softly.

"I can't wait to see it too. I'll bet it's going to be fantastic." Hermione said smiling. She had seen the pictures of the house he had bought but since it was in need of some serious restorations the place would have changed a lot by now.

"Anyway, let's get back inside. It's still cold outside isn't it?" Harry said to which Hermione eagerly nodded.

That night they performed the ritual once again and strengthened their knees and lower legs. All that was left now were their feet and then it was over. They calmly returned to the common room without encountering any problems and worked on their journals or even their animagus transformations. This was something they both looked forward to; the thought of being able to transform into an animal was something that spoke to their imagination and they worked hard towards that goal.

The month of March passed slowly but nothing seemed to happen; there were no further attacks and Ginny was looking healthy and happy. Harry and Hermione still kept watch on her but even they had to admit that if this was a ruse to throw off suspicion it was a good one. Nonetheless they kept their eyes open. With Dumbledore gone the Board of Governors had put Prof. McGonagall in charge of the school; at first things were a bit hectic but soon things calmed down enough so that daily life at Hogwarts could continue. The Headmistress had a good reputation and people trusted her enough to take care of their children. She had however said that she only took the position until Prof. Dumbledore was allowed back and that she had no intention of keeping that position any longer than possible.

It was now the end of March and Harry and Hermione had finished the ritual for strengthening their bones. Every major bone from head to toe was strong enough to withhold severe blows and only take minimal damage. They were both very proud of their accomplishment and now they were dedicating their time to the animagus project. Tonight however would be a breakthrough for Harry; it would be the start of an amazing adventure.

Harry and Hermione were the only ones left in the common room. The other Gryffindors weren't surprised anymore that the two of them spend long hours reading and doing their homework while the rest of them were already sleeping. Harry was meditating just like the book had said and thought about what kind of animal he could be. He pictured himself sitting in a large plain surrounded by trees and bushes. For the first time since he had started to meditate he felt the presence of someone or something. In his mind he opened his eyes and looked around trying to find that presence but he couldn't locate it.

Then he saw it; from the bushes a pair of eyes stared back at him. The eyes were big and full of life, it seemed as if they were looking straight at his soul trying to see if he was worthy of them. Harry looked at the eyes and noticed that they were almost the same color as his own eyes. He saw a black pupil surrounded by a fierce green emerald color that was captured in a small sphere of yellow. These were the eyes of a predator; something that would attack his prey at the first chance it got and shows no mercy. Harry could feel the connection. Like a predator he would hunt Voldemort and his Death-eaters; that's what he had promised all those years ago when he got that letter.

Slowly but surely he saw a figure emerge from the bushes and he couldn't help but hold his breath. He watched in amazement as the animal showed its face for the first time. Harry had never seen such a beautiful animal in all his life. The creature in front of him was imposing and majestic to say the least. He recognized it as a leopard and he felt very proud all of a sudden. To be deemed worthy of such an amazing transformation was nothing short of fabulous in his opinion. However the animal didn't come any closer and Harry was afraid that if he tried to move he would scare it away. It seemed to him that he wasn't quite ready for the transformation just yet. He felt a

bit disappointed but nodded glad that he had a animagus form even if he had to wait a bit more until he was ready. He gave the leopard a big smile and a nod showing that he respected the decision and to his surprise the animal seemed to nod back before disappearing in the woods.

Harry opened his eyes and slowly the common room appeared in his view. He was so excited that he jumped up scaring Hermione with his sudden movements. He started jumping around and even did a small dance around the common room. Hermione looked at him like he had lost it and it didn't take long before she started laughing at his behavior. It took her a while before she managed to calm him down enough so she could ask him what was going on.

"Hermione, I just saw the most amazing thing." Harry blurred out.

"What did you see? Did you see your form?" Hermione said excited.

"I can't hide anything from can I?" Harry said laughing. "I'm a leopard 'Mione. A leopard with beautiful green eyes."

"Oh Harry that's amazing. I'm so proud of you." Hermione said giving Harry a big hug. "Let's see what the book says now that you establish contact with your form."

Harry nodded and they quickly opened Hermione's book on the Animagus transformation. After reading through the first part they learned that once they found out their forms they would have get familiarized with it by getting to know it during meditation. They vowed to visit the library the next day to look up any information they might find on leopards. Hermione was slightly jealous of her best friend that he had already found his form but she was also very happy. She vowed to catch up to him soon enough and Harry reassured her that she would succeed very soon. Both went to bed feeling very excited that they had achieved success in another of their objectives.

Well that's it for this chapter. I hope you enjoyed it.

About Harry's animagus form: he will have (Hermione as well) several forms so the leopard is just the first he found. Later on in the story he will find his other form(s). Hermione will find her either during the summer or at the beginning of third year. So they will be training for it together if I decide to make things work that way.

See you when the next chapter comes out.

Chapter 16: The Chamber discovered

When the third week of April came along Harry and Hermione were still following Ginny around; so far nothing had happened but they knew it was matter of time before things got messy again. It was also a time where Hermione started stressing for the end of year exams. Not that she had anything to worry about but that's how she was and Harry knew better than to comment on it. To Hermione exams were a test to see how much she had learned over the whole year. In that aspect it was the same for any other student but Hermione took things to the next level; to her it was the confirmation that she needed to show that she had succeeded in meeting the goals she had set for herself at the beginning of the year. Naturally with exams came stress and she started to get nervous and no matter how much Harry told her that it would be okay she couldn't help it.

She had put all their other projects on hold for the time being until she could come up with an adequate schedule to plan her revisions. She started with appointing time for homework, re-reading notes from class and actual studying in the library. Harry didn't argue; he knew she was right and starting early with preparing was always better than to panic later on. Several Gryffindors had picked up Hermione's habit and joined them in the library.

On this particular evening Harry, Hermione and Ron were the only students left. The duo was still studying but Ron had fallen asleep several hours ago and nobody had awoken him when they left. So when Harry and Hermione finally called it a night they shook him awake. He was so surprised that he practically fell off his chair onto the ground making his fellow Gryffindors laugh.

"Haha, very funny you two." Ron said annoyed that they were laughing at his expense.

"Come on Ron, you can sleep in your bed." Harry said calling him from the hallway.

"Blimey, is it that late already? You two just finished studying now? It's almost 10 pm." Ron said shaking his head.

The trio made their way back to the common room careful not to encounter Filch on the way. All of the sudden they heard several voice in a heated conversation and they crept closer to see what was going on. They peeked around the corner and saw most of the teachers standing there staring at the wall. They looked at the wall wondering what was so special about it but two of the three had a bad feeling and it was confirmed when they saw the writings on the wall.

“Her bones shall forever lie in the Chamber of Secrets.”

“Oh Minerva, what does this mean?” Prof. Sprout said worried.

“I’m afraid that the Chamber of Secrets has once again claimed a student.” Prof. McGonagall said sadly. “But this time it seems that the price to pay has been death.”

“Oh my god.” Madame Pomfrey said shocked. “Do you which student is missing?”

“The only student we can’t account for is Ginny Weasley.” McGonagall said.

The trio was still listening and when they heard the name Harry quickly put his hand over Ron’s mouth so he wouldn’t alert the teachers of their presence. After struggling a bit Ron calmed down enough but they could see that he was having trouble. Harry and Hermione shared a look and instantly they knew what the other was thinking. They had to find a way to save Ginny; if something happened to her they wouldn’t be able to forgive themselves. There was no doubt in their minds that Ginny’s life was in serious danger. They turned so they could pay attention to what the teachers were saying.

“What are we going to do? We can’t just stand here doing nothing.” Prof. Flitwick said impatiently.

“There’s not much we can do, Filius.” McGonagall said. “We don’t know where the Chamber is and even if we did then there’s the monster as well.”

“Hey Lockhart, didn’t you say something about knowing the location of the Chamber this morning at breakfast.” Snape sneered at the man.

“W-what? O-oh of course; I just found out last night actually.” Lockhart stuttered.

“Well, here’s your chance to more fame and fortune. Go save Miss Weasley and dispose of that monster once and for all.” Snape said with a smile.

“I-I guess I’ll have to save the day once again.” He managed to say but all of those present knew that he was bluffing and they could actually see his knees shaking in fright. Lockhart turned around and raced as fast as he could towards his office. The rest of the teacher left as well trying to come up with something that could save Ginny and the school. The trio waited a few minutes before coming out of their hideout.

“Bloody Hell; Ginny is captured by the monster.” Ron panicked. “I have to save her.” And before Harry or Hermione could say anything he stormed after Lockhart.

“Ron, wait for us. We’ll help too.” Hermione said and she and Harry followed him.

Ron just barged into Lockhart’s office and not a second later both Harry and Hermione stormed in as well. What they saw shocked them beyond believe; Lockhart was hastily packing everything he owned into his trunks. The three students looked on as Lockhart threw a small tantrum when he was unable to close one of his trunks thanks to him throwing everything inside it. Harry couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Sure he knew Lockhart was a fake and he really shouldn’t be surprised at the scene but this made him very angry.

“What are you doing?” Harry questioned the man who clearly hadn’t noticed that he had visitors judging by how high he jumped.

“What does it look like? I’m getting out of here and I suggest you do the same thing.” Lockhart said still trying to close his trunk.

“You foul, despicable liar. You would abandon us without a second thought?” Hermione said clearly mad.

“Silly girl, don’t talk about things you don’t understand.” Lockhart said.

“But you have to save Ginny! She’s in danger and you’re the only one who knows where the Chamber of secrets is.” Ron pleaded with Lockhart who simply ignored him.

“Don’t bother Ron; there’s no way this fraud know where the Chamber is.” Harry said turning to Ron.

Lockhart, who had finally finished packing, turned towards Harry and sneered at him. For months he had tried to get Harry on his side but nothing seemed to work; no matter what he did or said Harry refused to cooperate with him. If only the boy would see reason; the two of them together could accomplish so much but alas it was not to be. He tried to push past Harry so he could get away from this blasted castle and even further away from the Chamber and Slytherin’s monster. It seemed however that the three in front of him wouldn’t let him leave that easily as all three of them had their wands aimed at him. Slowly he tried to raise his own wand but a quick kick to Lockhart’s wrist courtesy of Harry send the wand in the air where Hermione neatly caught it.

“I hope you weren’t going to use that on us Professor?” Harry said smirking.

“What the hell do you want huh?” Lockhart said furiously. “I don’t know anything about the Chamber.”

“Well, I guess we’re lucky that Hermione and I do.” Harry said. “Don’t worry Lockhart; we won’t take you with us.”

“Then why did you stop me from leaving?” Lockhart asked relieved and curious at the same time.

"Because the world needs to know just how much of a fraud you really are." Hermione said smirking. "Incarcerous"

Lockhart found himself tied down with strong and unbreakable ropes and fell down flat on his face. A quick stunner from Harry later and Lockhart was dealt with; after explaining to Ron that they wanted him to pay for lying and deceiving everyone they left the office. Ron then asked if they truly knew where the chamber was located and Hermione told him that they were pretty sure of it but that they would have to ask someone. They led him to the girl's bathroom on the second floor and called for Myrtle. It didn't take long for the young ghost to appear and like usual she started wailing about 'boys being in a girl's bathroom'.

"Please Myrtle we need your help." Hermione pleaded. "A girl's life is in danger and you're the only one who can help us."

"Oh sure everyone ignores ugly moping Moaning Myrtle except when she's needed." Myrtle moped.

"Please Myrtle, my little sister Ginny never hurt anyone and now she's taken by the monster of Slytherin." Ron begged her.

"Myrtle we think that it's the same monster that killed you." Hermione said. "Please help us catch the thing that did this to you." That seemed to catch Myrtle's attention and she stopped her complaining before nodding at the girl.

Hermione thanked her and started to ask her some question about how she died. Myrtle couldn't tell her much except that she had been crying in this very bathroom the day she had died; she had been made fun of by one of her classmates and had taken shelter in here. She then said that the only thing she remembered about it was that she had heard a creepy voice and so she had looked out of the booth and the next thing she knew she was dead.

"Where did you hear the voice?" Harry asked her. Myrtle didn't say anything but pointed at the sink in the middle of the bathroom and Harry knew that the faucet with the snake had everything to do with

the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. He thanked Myrtle and went to take another look at the faucet; he tried to turn it, twist it or move it but nothing happened. He then started to say words that Slytherin could have used as password but once again nothing worked.

"How about Parseltongue? Salazar Slytherin was one as well." Hermione said to Harry.

"Of course; that way only he or his descendants could open the chamber." Harry said before turning back to the faucet. He concentrated on speaking Parseltongue and hissed out the word 'Open'.

The trio plus one ghost looked on as the sink opened up and eventually completely disappeared revealing a shaft that would lead them to the Chamber of Secrets. Harry looked down the large hole and saw nothing but darkness; if they went down there they would have to be prepared for anything he realized. Hermione too seemed to realize this and she shuddered a bit. Ron however was almost ready to jump right in without any second thought and Harry barely managed to stop him.

"No Ron, we need a plan." Harry said after calming the redhead down.

"Harry is right Ron; we can't just jump in there." Hermione agreed.

"Ok fine what's your plan then?" Ron asked.

"Hermione and I will wait here while you go get the teachers. Once you're back we'll go together to get your sister." Harry said. Ron protested a bit at first but eventually agreed and left sprinting to get the teachers.

"Are we really going to wait here for them?" Hermione asked surprised.

"No 'Mione, I only said that so he would leave. He would only slow us down." Harry said. "It's not to be mean but we know more spells and magic than he does and we work better with just the two of us."

“I know, now come on.” Hermione said before grabbing Harry’s hand in hers. They nodded and jumped into the darkness together.

If this wasn’t such a serious situation Harry would have had the greatest time of his life. When they had jumped they found themselves sliding down a long and exciting tube at considerable speed. It was like the slide at theme parks or swimming pools and he enjoyed it greatly. Hermione on the other hand was terrified of it and wouldn’t stop screaming in his ear. She also grabbed a good hold of him and didn’t let go. Several minutes later they shot out of the tube and crashed into the ground. Hermione fell right on Harry who groaned in pain from falling; this part of the slide didn’t appeal to him at all. After Hermione got off him and pulled him up they noticed that they were standing on thousands of animal bones. Harry didn’t mind too much though he certainly didn’t enjoy it but Hermione was disgusted and she pushed him towards the other end of the small room into the corridor that connected to the Chamber.

“That was gross.” Hermione said making a face that clearly showed just how gross she thought it was.

Harry nodded and looked into the corridor before taking his wand and muttered a quiet ‘Lumos’. The light from the spell was more than enough to light the way and they started walking. The path was filled with rocks and it seemed that the place could collapse at in giving time so they were very careful. After walking for a few minutes Hermione nudged Harry to get his attention. When he looked at her she pointed to something that she had seen on his right. When they took a closer look they found the remains of what used to be snake skin. It was almost completely gone and wasn’t of any use what so ever but what shocked them the most was the sheer size of it. If the basilisk was a big as the skin indicated then they had a serious problem.

After continuing for several minutes they finally came to a large door that resembled a vault door. It was round and had snakes pictured on it once again showing Slytherin’s obsession with the creatures. They didn’t have to think long before they realized that they would have to use Parseltongue once again but before that Harry took out his

invisibility cloak and wrapped it around Hermione. She didn't protest but she still asked why she had to wear it.

"That way you're my backup." Harry told her. "Nobody will know you're there and if something happens you can help me out."

Hermione nodded and told him that he could count on her making Harry chuckle saying that he already did. He once again opened the door by saying 'open' in Parseltongue and a snake moved on the door opening the locks. Then the door opened slowly and once he had enough space he and Hermione slipped through it into the chamber. First thing they noticed was how big it was; without a doubt the place was larger than the great hall and they both saw the possibilities the Chamber would offer as a secret hideout. Next thing they saw or felt rather was the water that somehow had accumulated in the Chamber but that would be easy to deal with. Finally they looked straight in front of them and saw a stone statue of a man and they guessed that this was Salazar Slytherin himself. As Harry stepped forward he noticed two people standing on the side of the statue. One person was standing while the other lied down on the stone floor. He gasped as he saw that it was Ginny and he rushed to her sides to check up on her. For a second he thought she was dead but then he noticed the shallow breathing and relaxed before he turned to the person standing next to him.

"Harry Potter, welcome to the Chamber of Secrets." The figure said now turning towards Harry.

"Tom Riddle, I knew you were the one behind all of this." Harry said instantly recognizing the young man from the memory.

"Yes, you did quite well. I must admit that you surprised me Harry Potter." Tom said. "We have so much to talk about so why don't we get started."

"I have nothing to say to the likes of you." Harry said calmly. "Now release Ginny from your hold!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that. You see, little Ginny here is transferring her life force back to me." Tom snickered. "Now answer me boy, how did you defeat the most powerful Dark Lord of all times?"

"Why do you want to know about Voldemort?" Harry asked surprised.

"So you haven't figured it out yet?" Tom laughed. "Let me show young Potter."

Tom raised his hand and Harry noticed that he was holding Ginny's wand. Tom started to write in the air with red fiery letters; Harry read the words and saw that it was a name. It read 'Tom Marvolo Riddle' and before he could ask what the purpose was Tom flicked his wand and the letters rearranged themselves. Harry looked again and read 'I am Lord Voldemort'.

"Do you see now Potter?" Tom said smiling. "Lord Voldemort is who I am; Lord Voldemort is my true self."

"I understand it better now; so all of this was to allow us to meet?" Harry said shocked. He knew Hermione must be terrified by standing in the presence of the man that would later become the strongest Dark Lord the Wizarding World even knew.

"Oh no, this is just a little bonus. My main intention was to be revived by using the girl's life force." Voldemort, or Tom Riddle if you will, chuckled. "Now tell me how you defeated me; I refuse to believe that a mere babe managed to destroy me."

"I'm glad to say that's it the truth nonetheless." Harry said bravely. "I defeated you before and I will do it again."

"You foolish little child." Tom said before turning towards the statue of Salazar Slytherin. He then started speaking in Parseltongue and Harry understood exactly what he was saying.

"Come to me protector of my forefathers. Your master commands you." Tom spoke and for a second nothing happened but then Salazar's mouth opened up and Tom started laughing loudly. "This is

the end for you Potter; don't think that it will listen to you just because you can talk to it. It only follows its true masters."

Harry took a step back knowing what was coming towards him. He had to get some distance between them and so he ran to the other side of the Chamber. For all their planning and thinking Harry and Hermione had done they hadn't come up with a way to protect themselves from the Basilisk deathly stare. It seemed that nothing was capable of stopping the effect of death when one looked at its eyes. Harry felt Hermione standing next to him still under his cloak and he whispered to her to hide herself as far as possible from him since it would come after him. He said that he counted on her to come up with a plan to deal with the monstrous snake.

"It's all over now Potter; soon I'll be back and Hogwarts will be mine now that Dumbledore is out of the picture." Tom laughed again. "After decades of trying I finally succeeded in my endeavors."

"Shut up Tom; Hogwarts will never be yours. As long as there are people willing to fight for what is right and to protect others you will never win." Harry shouted back. There was no way he would allow Voldemort to take control of Hogwarts.

Just then the basilisk finally appeared and it waited for his master's orders. Tom quickly ordered it to kill Harry and the snake advanced slowly towards his prey. Harry turned his head so he wouldn't look it into the eyes and started to panic a bit. Just then a song was heard and the song seemed very familiar to Harry but he couldn't remember where he had heard it before. The sound became closer and closer and right in front of him Fawkes appeared in a bright flash of fire. The song and the heat of the flames seemed to strengthen Harry and his panic disappeared. Fawkes landed on his shoulder and dropped something in front of him before engaging the basilisk who had stopped his advance. While Fawkes was distracting the basilisk Harry picked up the package the phoenix had dropped. When he took it in his hands he noticed that it was the Sorting Hat.

"Quickly Potter, put me on your head." The Hat said and Harry complied. He had just put it on his head when something hard fell right on the top of his skull. Taking the Hat back off a sword fell on the

floor and Harry instantly knew that he would have to use it to defeat the Slytherin's monster. Fawkes on the meanwhile had pecked out the eyes of basilisk causing it great pain. Tom was furious that the phoenix had managed to destroy the basilisk's strongest weapon but calmed when he realized that the basilisk was far from helpless even without its eyes.

Harry knew that Hermione was holding back until he was in trouble and now that the most dangerous ability of the basilisk had been destroyed things were looking a bit better. Still he didn't waste any time and ran away from the creature so he wouldn't get caught in a surprise attack. The monster still had his venomous fangs and Harry was sure he would be able to find him even without his eyes. His guess was correct when he heard Riddle shouting to the basilisk that he could still find Harry by using his ears. Suddenly he felt Hermione brushing next to him and it helped him in staying focused. He knew his best friend wouldn't abandon him and it gave him strength. She whispered to him that she would distract the basilisk with sounds coming from around the chamber by throwing some rocks so Harry could try to find a way to deal with the giant snake.

Harry nodded and whispered that she had to try to lure the snake towards the statue of Salazar before he ran across the chamber towards where the stone pillars were supporting the roof. He quickly covered himself behind it and cast a 'Disillusionment Charm' to make him invisible. He then cast a 'Silencing charm' to his feet so he wouldn't make any noise while sneaking around. Meanwhile Hermione had placed herself strategically near the entrance of Chamber; she had climbed one of the broken pillars and gathered some stones that she could throw around. It was a good hiding place because Riddle couldn't see her from where he was standing. The basilisk was searching the chamber for Harry and she threw her first stone.

Alerted by the noise the snake reared its head and headed towards the sound. Hermione let out a breath she had been holding when she saw that their plan was working. She grabbed another rock and hurled it across the chamber distracting both Riddle and the snake from Harry who was still sneaking to the statue. Riddle was laughing at how desperate Harry might be not realizing he was being played.

While Hermione was busy with throwing rocks Harry had finally managed to reach the statue and had started climbing it. This proved to be much harder than he anticipated since the statue was wet and slippery but once he got a good foothold he reached to top and stood ready for the next part of the plan. He raised his wand and ended the 'Disillusionment Charm' for a second so that Hermione would know that he was ready. Riddle had his back turned to the statue so he didn't see a thing.

Hermione noticed that Harry was ready and she threw her last rock as hard as she could so it would land just next to the statue. Following the sound the snake slithered to where the sound came from and under two seconds the snake was just under Harry. Seeing that the snake's head was just beneath him Harry braced himself and jumped down from the statue aiming the sword straight down. The sword pierced the basilisk's skull as Harry landed straight into its brain killing it almost instantly. The creature still struggled a bit and Harry had to hold on very tightly so he wouldn't fall off but a few seconds later the monster crashed into the floor. Unfortunately Harry lost his grip and fell on the stone floor hard. He winced as he felt he shoulder dislocate and his vision turned blurry when his head impacted on the floor just after that.

Riddle was furious; his precious basilisk had been killed by a twelve year old boy. His plans for using the creature to dispose of those Mudbloods above had been ruined and once again he had to thank Harry Potter for it. He looked at his body and saw that he was almost fully corporeal which meant he would be able to finish off Potter himself. That brought a smile to his face and full of confidence he walked towards his nemesis.

"Curse you Potter. Once again you've intervened with my plans but this is the end for you." Riddle sneered. "You may have killed my pet but in a few moments I'll be the one to finish you."

Harry wasn't worried; sure he saw stars and his vision was distorted thanks to hitting the floor but he had an ally on his side. Hermione would do something to save him he was sure of that. He figured that she was now getting closer so she could help him. He just needed to distract Riddle long enough.

“Please, you couldn’t kill me as a baby and you won’t succeed now.” Harry said dismissing Riddle which infuriated him even more.

While Riddle was busy threatening Harry, Hermione had retrieved the sword from the basilisk skull. It had to be done silently and her heart was beating like crazy but she had done it. Quickly putting it under the cloak she then walked towards the Diary. She was sure that Riddle’s existence was somehow linked to it so if she destroyed it then Riddle would be dealt with as well. Luckily the diary was just next to Ginny several feet away from Harry and Riddle. She prayed she was right and with one downward thrust she stabbed the diary with the tip of the sword. It had an instantaneous effect; Riddle who was still threatening Harry stopped in mid sentence only to let out an ear deafening scream of pain.

Harry looked up and saw that Riddle’s body was beginning to crack and emitting light. He turned to look behind the screaming Riddle only to see Hermione taking off the invisibility cloak revealing what she had done. She grinned at him before raising the sword once more and stabbed the diary again. Riddle let out another scream before exploding in a ray of light. Hermione hurried over to Harry and hugged him glad that he was okay and relatively unhurt.

“We did it Harry.” She said while still hugging him.

“Yeah, you were great ‘Mione.” Harry said glad to have his friend on his side. “Still, think you can help me with my shoulder?”

Hermione nodded before helping him pop his shoulder back into position. Harry let out a small whimper of pain but endured it. To his surprise Fawkes landed next to him and cried on his painful arm; in less than five seconds the pain was gone and he could move his arm like nothing happened.

“Told you those bone strengthening rituals were worth it.” Harry joked. It was true; if he hadn’t done those rituals he was sure that his shoulder would have been broken not to mention he would have cracked his skull.

"I know. But then again you always were thickheaded." Hermione joked back.

"Very funny Miss Granger." Harry laughed before turning serious. "How's Ginny?"

"She should be fine. She's breathing normally and her heartbeat is regular." Hermione said after checking Ginny.

"Good, now how about we get out of here. I've seen enough of the Chamber for the rest of the day."

"Any idea how?" Hermione asked. She doubted that they could take the same way back towards the surface.

Harry didn't know and so he started looking around for an exit. He also picked up the sorting hat, the sword and the diary. After taking a quick look around he frowned when he didn't seem to find an exit. Just then however Fawkes appeared again and grabbed Harry's shoulder before he flashed them just next to Hermione. A face-splitting smile appeared on both their faces when they realized that Fawkes could 'flash' them back to the surface. They grabbed hold of each other and Ginny and asked Fawkes if he could bring them to the hospital wing. With a few notes of his song Fawkes did just that.

Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Now the second year is as good as finished so now it's time to think of the future. In the next chapter Harry will deal with the aftermath of the Chamber and will make a new friend. See you in two weeks for the next chapter. Bye for now.

Chapter 17: End of Second year

Madam Pomfrey or 'Poppy' for the friends had been a healer for quite some time now. She had known forever that she wanted to cure and heal people so when she got to Hogwarts she studied hard so she would have the necessary grades to get her Healer's license. After seven years of hard work she finally had a chance of becoming a real healer and so she had gladly accepted a position at St. Mungo's. For several years she trained and learned under the best Healers the Wizarding world had to offer until finally she became a full pledged healer herself. She loved her job although it took a lot of her time and was very stressful at times. Especially during the war with You-Know-Who it was very depressing to see families ripped apart by attacks. There was nothing she hated more than inform someone that a family member had passed away.

After the war Albus Dumbledore had asked her if she was interested in becoming the school's healer. She didn't have to think long about it as she had enough of death and misery that was part of daily life at St. Mungo's. She didn't regret it one bit; sure the kids were loud and annoying at times but most of the time she had a great time. Injuries were often the result of Quidditch thus were mostly broken bones at worst. Now however she had several patients that were in bad shape and she wondered what was going on at Hogwarts. In her days no students got petrified by some monster and she wondered if this was a sign of things yet to come. She shook the dark thoughts out of her head and went to check up on her patients; she would be glad when those students were healed. And now one student went missing in the fabled 'Chamber of Secrets'. She didn't look forward to the conversation she was going to have with Molly Weasley.

When she opened the door from her office to step into her work area she almost dove behind a bed when a large ball of flames appeared in the middle of the room. She relaxed when she saw that it was Fawkes but then she spotted the three kids and immediately went over to them.

"What is going on here?" she demanded before looking down at Ginny. "Oh my god is that Miss Weasley?"

“Madam Pomfrey, please take a look at Ginny.” Hermione said levitating Ginny on an empty bed.

Pomfrey didn’t have to be told twice and a moment later she was in full Healer mode. She ordered both Harry and Hermione to sit down so she could take a look at them later before closing the curtain. She did some diagnostic scans of Ginny’s vital stats but as far as she could tell Ginny was in good health. She was pale and a bit on the skinny side but nothing that a few meals wouldn’t undo. After doing all her checkups she gave the girls a few potions and left seeing the girl was sleeping peacefully.

She was about to order Harry and Hermione to lie down on a bed so she could check them too when Dumbledore and McGonagall entered the room. Apparently Fawkes had alerted them of their return and they hurried over. The two teens were surprised to see Dumbledore back in the castle but figured that he would explain everything later on. McGonagall went over to Ginny and a small tear appeared when she noticed the girl was sleeping. Madam Pomfrey came over and explained that she hadn’t found anything wrong with the girl except magical exhaustion and a bit of malnourishment. Dumbledore seemed very happy to hear that the girl was alright before turning to Harry and Hermione.

“I sense that we owe Miss Weasley’s safety to the both of you.” Dumbledore said calmly. “Why don’t we head to my office so you can tell us what happened.”

“Now wait just a minute Headmaster.” Pomfrey said in a no nonsense voice. “I haven’t checked upon Mr. Potter and Miss Granger.”

“That’s alright Madam Pomfrey. Fawkes healed my wounds with his tears.” Harry said smiling at her.

“I’ll be sure to send them straight back here if something is wrong Poppy.” Dumbledore said before he ushered the children out of the hospital wing.

Dumbledore walked in silence with the two kids following him closely. It was about 10 minute walk from the hospital wing to his office and when they finally reached the hallway where the statue that gave access to his office was they had a surprise visit. A man with fancy clothes and a cane was waiting for them and at his side was a house elf that Harry and Hermione immediately recognized as Dobby.

"You've got some nerve Dumbledore." Lucius Malfoy said. "You have been instructed to leave the school and yet here you are."

"Ah Lucius good to see you." Dumbledore said. "Why don't you join us in my office?"

"You better have a good explanation for your presence here Dumbledore." Malfoy sneered before pushing past Harry and Hermione like they weren't even there.

"I believe my story will be quite to your satisfaction." Dumbledore said after sitting down in his favorite chair. "Now the reason why I'm here is that the Board of Governors deemed it necessary for me to be here when they heard that a student's life was in danger. Also most of them told me that they were forced to vote for my resignation because someone threatened their families. You wouldn't know anything about that would you?"

"How dare you accuse me of such a thing?" Lucius said trying to act innocent.

"Yes of course I'm sorry Lucius but you have somewhat a reputation for using force when you want something done." Dumbledore said smiling. "No matter; and yes the student is quite alright thank you for asking." He continued and both Harry and Hermione had to stifle a laugh at hearing that. "Both Harry and Hermione here saved young Miss Weasley from whatever had taken her. I was just about to ask them what happened."

"Well then on behalf of the Board of Governors I would like to be present for that." Lucius said trying to look important.

Harry and Hermione told everything that had happened; they told how Ginny had started acting weird after the Christmas holidays and how they had kept an eye on her. Harry then told them about the diary and took it out of his pocket laying it on Dumbledore's desk. He seemed very interested in it for a moment before he nodded to continue. Harry and Hermione both saw how Malfoy reacted when he saw the diary and they just knew he was the one to blame for all this trouble. They told them how they had found the Chamber of Secrets and how they got inside. Finally they told them about Tom Riddle and how they defeated the basilisk and Tom himself.

"Extraordinary; amazingly done both of you." Dumbledore said clapping in his hands. "I think that this deserves 100 points each for bravery and saving a fellow student's life."

"Just wait a minute Dumbledore who is this 'Tom Riddle' they speak of?" Malfoy said.

"Tom Riddle is none other than Voldemort." Harry said showing Dumbledore and Malfoy the anagram just like Tom had done down in the Chamber.

Malfoy blanched at hearing his master's name and nodded weakly. He realized that he was in a world of trouble and pain if his master ever found out that he had lost one of his prized possessions. His master would return he was sure of that but now for a brief moment he wished it would never happen. He would have to come up with a plan to appease his master's anger. For now however Malfoy nodded and turned towards the exit of Dumbledore's office kicking Dobby along the way. This made both Harry and Hermione very mad at seeing the poor elf treated so badly. Harry grabbed the diary and sped after Malfoy.

"Excuse me Mr. Malfoy but you forget something." Harry yelled at the man?

"And what might that be? Malfoy sneered at Harry.

"You forget your master's diary." Harry said throwing the diary at Malfoy. "I know that you gave that diary to Ginny."

"I don't know what you're talking about and even if I did you have no proof what so ever." Malfoy laughed at Harry.

"Really? What would happen if I, the Boy-who-lived would submit a memory from the day you and Mr. Weasley fought to Dumbledore and the ministry?" Harry said grinning. "I bet you that they would notice you slipping that diary into Ginny's cauldron. What would happen if you would be associated with Voldemort after you were suspected of being his follower in the previous war?" Malfoy was seething mad but didn't say anything. "I think you would be dosed with 'Veritaserum' and questioned before you could say 'Imperious curse'."

"You have no idea who you're messing with boy." Malfoy threatened.

"It's you who don't know Malfoy but I'm a reasonable person. Tell you what in exchange for that elf I'll keep my mouth shut." Harry smirked.

Malfoy was feeling conflicted; on the one hand he could attack Potter but then he would have to deal with Dumbledore and that was bad. On the other hand he would could give Potter what he wanted and get a new elf. In the end the choice was easy and he threw Dobby one of his gloves before walking away. When he was almost gone he turned around.

"Mark my words Potter. One day you'll meet your end just like your parents and I'll be on the front row." Malfoy said before disappearing around the corner.

Harry shrugged and turned towards the little elf who was still staring at the white glove that his master had given to him. To most elves receiving clothes was just about the worst thing that could happen to them but Dobby honestly wanted to be free of his abusive master. For years he had dreamed about it and now that it finally had happened he couldn't believe it. Harry was getting worried about the elf and put his hand on Dobby's shoulder.

"Are you okay Dobby?" Harry asked the little elf.

“Dobby is free. Master gave Dobby clothes so Dobby is free.” The elf rambled loudly.

“Yes Dobby you’re free to do whatever you like. Do you have any plans?” Harry asked interested. He had an idea but he wouldn’t force Dobby now that he was finally free.

“Dobby isn’t knowing but Dobby is wanting to be free for long time.” Dobby said.

“Well Dobby, I have a proposition for you. Would you be interested?” Harry whispered. Seeing that the house elf’s head was going up and down really fast Harry continued. “You see Dobby I could use your help this summer. I need someone I can trust and someone who can help me with what I need.”

“Harry Potter sir is asking for Dobby’s help?” The elf asked quietly. “Oh Dobby is accepting sir; Dobby would be honored to be Harry Potter sir’s elf.”

“Okay we can talk later. How do I call you?” Harry asked. He needed to talk to the elf but he was too tired to do at the moment.

“Master Harry only needs to say Dobby’s name and Dobby will come.” The excited little elf said before disappearing into thin air.

Harry just shook his head smiling at the elf’s antics and knew that this was the beginning of a weird but beautiful friendship. For now however all he wanted was some sleep and relaxation and it seemed that he was going to get it as Dumbledore and Hermione arrived at the hall and Dumbledore ordered them to go to the hospital wing for a checkup and then they were ordered to get to bed. Any other questions and answers could wait until the next day. Harry and Hermione didn’t protest and willingly did as they were told.

The next morning was hectic too say the least; first of all Harry and Hermione had to deal with Mrs. Weasley who smothered them with hugs and thanks for saying her little girl. Ginny still hadn’t woken up but according to Madam Pomfrey this was normal since she had to rest a lot to recover from the exhaustion. When both teens finally

managed to escape the matriarch of the Weasley family they had been thanked by all the brothers. Of course Fred and George were the most comical about it being the prankster that they are. Percy was thankful but stayed in his role of prefect by given them a warning not to wonder around Hogwarts after curfew. Ron however was mad that they didn't wait for him.

"How come you guys didn't wait for me?" Ron said furiously.

"We're sorry Ron we just thought that it would be better that we went on ahead." Hermione said quickly.

"Besides we also thought that you and the teachers would be joining us." Harry added.

"Well we would have if you guys didn't close the way in." Ron said angrily.

Both Harry and Hermione shared a look before telling him that they didn't close the sink. After thinking about it a bit Hermione said that the sink probably closed automatically after a certain period of time so nobody would find it open by accident. It was a good explanation so Ron didn't protest any more, he was however sad that he didn't get to see the famous Chamber of Secrets and secretly he was still mad at being left behind. He knew however that the Harry and Hermione were the best of friends and that he didn't really know them all that well. The three walked to the Great Hall to get some lunch since it was already noon. When Harry and Hermione entered however all conversation stopped and they all turned around to look at them. Harry sighed knowing that everyone knew that they had saved Ginny and defeated Slytherin's monster. He really hated the attention he got from the Wizarding World; their hero worshipping was something he couldn't really understand.

They quickly made their way over to the Gryffindor table and started eating while ignoring most of the question from their teammates. They answered a few but any question about the location of the Chamber or what had happened they simply said that they were forbidden to talk about it. They told them that they had sworn a magical oath not to tell anyone about it and most of the kids backed

off after that. Everyone knew the prize that came with breaking a magical oath so they knew they weren't going to find out anything. Slowly everyone started eating again and both Harry and Hermione relaxed a bit; they knew they would be dodging questions for days to come. When everyone was done eating Prof. Dumbledore stood up and addressed the students.

"May I have your attention for just a moment?" Dumbledore said and the crowd went quiet almost instantly. "Thank you. For the past few months things at Hogwarts have been very chaotic and dangerous. I'm happy to say that this danger is now gone from our school forever." And with this announcement the crowd went crazy with cheers. "Yes indeed. I have also received word from Madam Pomfrey that our petrified students should be back to their former selves in a few days." Again the cheering deafened the Great Hall. "Seeing that we all had enough excitement and stress to deal with over the whole year the teachers and I have decided to give you all a reward." Now the crowd was so silent that you could hear a pin drop. Each of them wanted to know what this reward was. "There will be NO end of year exams except for OWL's and NEWT's this year."

This made everyone, well except the fifth and seventh year students, cheer in happiness that they didn't have to deal with those pesky exams. Hermione of course was also a bit disappointed at not having any way to test her knowledge. Harry whispered to her they could use this time for meditation so she could find her animagus form. This made her smile and she forgot all about the exams now thinking how great it would be if she found her form before the holidays.

"I have one more announcement to make." Dumbledore said after the students had calmed down a bit. "As some of you might have noticed our Defense against the Dark Arts teacher is no longer with us. It was discovered that Gilderoy Lockhart was a fraud who used other people's accomplishments as his own before obliterating them and thus take credit. He has been arrested by the ministry and therefore the Defense against the Dark Arts class is canceled for the rest of the year."

Harry and Hermione let Ron tell everyone how they had discovered Gilderoy attempt to leave unnoticed and how they stopped him. They

had too much attention already so they didn't mind Ron taking most of the credit for that. They quietly left the table and went to the common room so they could relax for a bit. They were still a bit tired from the events in the Chamber so they figured they deserved a few days off.

The rest of the school year was pretty much going to class and then lots and lots of free time since the exams were canceled. Harry and Hermione used this time to work on their special projects like the animagus transformation but neither of them had made much progress. Hermione thought she could feel the presence of something but so far it hadn't revealed itself to her. They also spend some time thinking about the Chamber of Secrets and how to get there unnoticed. They were convinced that Dumbledore had sealed off the entrance in the girl's bathroom or at least put on some wards that would notify him in case someone tried to open it. So far they hadn't found anything but Harry told Hermione that he might have found a way but he needed to check something first. Speaking of Hermione, she had received a letter from her parents that they would be going on a holiday for the first three weeks of the summer vacation. She was kind of sad to leave Harry behind but he assured her that he would have plenty of things to do until she was back. Hermione promised that she would send a letter as soon she was back from her trip so they could agree on a place and time to meet.

The train ride home was fairly uneventful; Harry and Hermione shared a compartment and had some visits from the Weasley twins and Ron. They told them that Ginny was doing much better after spending some time at home with their parents. She had been pulled out of school as soon as Madam Pomfrey cleared her so she could come to terms with what had happened. It proved to be the best thing they could have done as Harry was sure she would have been stalked with questions. Nobody outside the original group of people involved knew about Ginny's role in the attacks only that she had been the victim of the last attack.

When they had company they talked and played 'explosive snap' or just had fun laughing with silly things. Harry enjoyed it immensely; he loved being around Hermione but sometime it felt good being around

other people as well. He vowed to make an effort next year so he would make some new friends. Hermione would always be his first and best friend but more friends couldn't hurt. It would be good for Hermione as well since she didn't really have many friends. The girls in her dorm were more interested in fashion and gossip and she had trouble connecting with them.

Several hours later they arrived at King Cross station and it didn't take long for Hermione to find her parents. She dropped her bag and ran straight at them; she hadn't seen them since the beginning of the school year last year so she had missed them terribly. Harry smiled at the scene and when Emma called him over so she could give him a hug as well he hurried over. Harry loved Emma's hugs as they were everything he ever wanted in a mother's hug.

"Let me take a look at the two of you." Emma said happily. "Oh, you've grown so much both of you."

"She's right, you both look great." Dan said agreeing with his wife.

"Yes well, it's been months since we last saw each other." Hermione smiled. "Oh, I missed you so much mum."

"We've missed you too sweetie." Emma said smiling happy that her little girl was back.

Seeing that Harry's uncle wasn't there yet they went to a small stand where they sold some beverages and together they waited. Harry and Hermione told about Hogwarts and what they had learned but they wisely didn't say anything about the Chamber of Secrets or the fact that they had fought and killed a basilisk. Thirty minutes later Vernon arrived and Harry could tell he wasn't in a good mood so he quickly said goodbye to the Grangers and promised to write letters later in the holiday. Hermione and her parents looked at how Vernon berated Harry for letting him wait and watched as they drove off towards Privet Drive.

"I really don't like Harry's uncle." Hermione said. "He's always so mean to Harry."

"I know honey but there's nothing we can do about it." Dan said knowing how his daughter felt about Vernon. "I'm sure that if something happens Harry will let us know."

"I hope so; sometimes Harry thinks his problems aren't worth mentioning." Hermione sighed before getting in the car as well.

When he finally arrived at Privet Drive Harry didn't waste any time and quickly got his stuff out of the car's trunk. Without saying a word he dragged his trunk upstairs to his 'bedroom' and neatly put everything away. Once he was sure that everything was in order he went downstairs to greet his aunt. He didn't look forward to her nagging but there wasn't anything he could do about it for now. He planned to visit Mrs. McPherson of the real estate company as soon as possible so he could move into his own house. He looked forward to that; no Petunia or Vernon to deal with and no Dudley that would annoy him all the time.

He did know however that he couldn't move out permanently. If he did that he would alert Dumbledore and that was something that needed to be avoided as long as possible. He didn't like it but the Blood Wards that surrounded the house at Privet Drive were too good not to use. He would have to find a way to travel from here to his house and back; he had first thought about apparation but he wasn't old enough to learn and that would also trigger the underage magic alarm. This was something he would think about tonight and the coming days.

Thank you for reading the chapter. I hope you enjoyed it so let me know how it did. The next chapter will be released in two weeks like usual. See you all then.

Chapter 18: A home, a friend and some shopping

Harry had been back at Privet Drive for only a few days and already he was annoyed by his relatives. First of all came the yearly speech of keeping his freakish ways away from their so called 'perfect' family; then came the ridiculous amount of chores he had to do around the house and frankly it was pissing him off. It seemed to him that he kept those chores specifically for him to do. All this resulted in the fact that he still hadn't been able to visit both his bank manager and the lady at the real estate company. Today however he would take care of both; the Dursleys were going on a family day trip and of course Harry wasn't invited which suited him just fine. So as soon as their car was out of his sight he raced upstairs and grabbed his things and put everything in small backpack and headed out.

Once he had left Privet Drive he put on his necklace so he wouldn't be Harry Potter any longer and became James Evans. Taking a taxi to the bank he quickly went inside to make an appointment with Sebastian so he could go over his investments. To his surprise Sebastian just came out his office and immediately recognized him before calling him inside. It turned out that Sebastian didn't have any appointments that day so if he wanted they could do it straight away.

"James, how have you been?" Sebastian said smiling.

"I've been busy but I can't complain. What about you?" Harry said playing along.

"Not too bad James, we've had a good year so things are looking great." Sebastian said before looking up Harry's file on his computer.

After some more small talk they went down to business, starting the review of Harry's investments. Once again Harry had made a small fortune thanks to his future self's knowledge and Harry was pleased to see just how much money he had made. He had made enough profit to buy several more houses if he needed to and still have more than enough for the future. Sebastian congratulated Harry on his ability to pick out the best firms to invest in.

“Thank you Sebastian but it’s more my advisors who tell me where to invest than my own ability.” Harry said.

“Yes well, they’re doing a bang up job for you.” Sebastian said. “Are there any new investments you would like to make?”

“Only one.” Harry said giving the man a paper with the necessary details on it.

About an hour later Harry left the bank feeling very happy about how things had worked out this past year. His investment had done very well and he was making a considerable amount of money. Of course a large sum would be used to equip him and his future team in fighting Voldemort but for now he would use it to furniture his house. He wanted it to have everything that could be needed; he also wanted to use one of the rooms to make a small gym so he could work out a little bit.

Since he still had more than enough time before the Dursleys were back, he grabbed a cab and went to his real estate office. Ten minutes later he arrived and went inside asking if he could speak to Mrs. McPherson. The secretary pressed the button on the intercom and told her boss that a certain Mr. Evans was here to see her. A few seconds later the doors to a large office opened and Josie greeted Harry like a long time friend.

“Mr. Evans, such a pleasure seeing you again.” She said guiding him into her office.

“Likewise Mrs. McPherson but please James will do.” Harry said smiling.

“Then it’s Josie for you as well James.” Josie said before ordering her secretary for some tea.

“Thank you Josie. If you don’t mind I’ll get straight to the point?” Harry asked politely. “How did the renovations go?”

“Not at all James we’re both busy people.” Josie said taking out a large album. “The renovations are finished just like we agreed and

once I give you the key you're all set to move in. But before that I would like to show you some of the work we have done. I'll try not to spoil too much for you."

Josie then proceeded to show him the album which had pictures that showed the progress during the renovations. Josie explained each picture and what they had done to the house. Harry was amazed at the transformation; the property was nothing like he remembered and he could already tell that he would love the place. He listened carefully to what Josie was telling and he knew that he had made the right decision to trust her with everything.

"So basically we've dismantled the house and rebuild it with the latest materials and technologies. The roof has been redone as it had some serious leakage and one wall was redone as well." Josie finished her explanation.

"Josie, I'm astonished at what you have done with the place." Harry breathed. "It looks absolutely amazing, I can't thank you enough."

"Oh no James, it's me who should be thanking you. It was a wonderful project and I gained a lot of experience with it." Josie said. "Not to mention the financial benefits."

"Were the funds I supplied sufficient?" Harry asked a bit concerned.

"Oh yes, in fact it gave us more than enough to work with. No worries there." Josie said while showing Harry the papers which had every number and the total cost of the project.

Josie had done a wonderful job and she even stayed within the money limits; when the renovations of the buildings were done she had used the remaining funds for the gardens and the driveway. Harry was very pleased with the result and he told Josie more than once how he felt. After drinking a glass of champagne to celebrate the end of project Josie handed him the keys and thanked him for relying on her and her company. Harry vowed that if he ever had plans to buy another house he would be coming straight to her and this pleased Josie too; she had made a nice profit with this project

and she was willing to do it all over again. This project had made her significantly wealthier after all.

Harry thanked her once again and left the office eager to see his new home. Quickly calling a taxi and giving the man the address he sped towards his house. It didn't take that long with taxi once they left the city and about half an hour later Harry stood in front of the gate that led to the house. He opened the gate with one of the keys and walked alongside the path. It was big enough for two cars to pass and it was beautifully made with trees and bushes on the sides. The path turned to the right and once he crossed the corner his jaw dropped. The house was magnificent; he felt straight at home and he could already see him grow old in this place. The house had a large veranda which was aimed to the south fully catching the sun; from the path to the front door you could follow a path around the house while being surrounded by a large grass field. On the side of the house was a garage big enough to park two cars and when you passed the garage you came into the backyard which was a huge open space; the whole domain was surrounded by trees so nobody could see the property. Just next to the house was a second building that could be used as a garage or storage room.

With shaking hands he opened the front door and stepped inside. The hall was beautiful; the walls were painted with a soft crème color making it very inviting and relaxing. On the side he saw the stairs to go to the second floor. He would explore that later, for now he wanted to look around downstairs. The hall was open so it gave out to the living room; the room was huge in Harry's opinion and there was lots of free space which would allow a set of couches to be placed in the middle. There was even an open fireplace just like he had asked. The living room had large windows that showed the backyard in all its glory. It also had a double glass door that would allow you access to the veranda.

The kitchen was on the other side of the living room; in fact it seemed to be in the same space without any walls or doors separating the two rooms. The kitchen was modern with a cooking island in the middle and a large dining table that would allow at least eight people to sit down. Harry liked it immediately; he could already see himself cooking for his family.

There were two more rooms downstairs; one could be used as an office while the other was a small bathroom. Harry then went back to the hallway and climbed the stairs. The first room he entered was a large bathroom; the bath looked big enough to fit at least two people and Harry blushed a bit at sharing the tub with someone. He then noticed that the bathtub wasn't just an ordinary tub it was also a Jacuzzi, something that he had never tried before. There were also two sinks and a large shower thus completing the bathroom.

The rest of rooms were mostly designed to be bedrooms and Harry counted up to seven rooms. At least he would have enough room he figured. He also chose his own room; he didn't pick the biggest one since he had plans for that room but his bedroom was the second biggest one. Going back downstairs he went to see the basement; he discovered that the basement was almost as big as the living room and the kitchen together which pleased him greatly. Nodding he went back upstairs and took off his pendant preparing to call over his newest friend.

"Dobby?" Harry said loudly and not even a second later he felt someone grab onto his legs.

"Master Harry Potter sir called Dobby. Dobby is being so glad Master called." Dobby said excited.

"Hi Dobby, how are you doing?" Harry said laughing at his friend's excitement.

"Dobby is doing fine Sir; I am being waiting for Harry Potter Sir to call me." Dobby said happy.

"Well Dobby, I have several questions for you so I hope you can help me." Harry said. "First of all, do you still want to work for me?"

"Oh yes Harry Potter Sir, Dobby would love working for Harry Potter Sir." Dobby immediately said.

"Great thank you Dobby. Now this is my house but as you can see I don't live here yet. I still live with my relatives for the unforeseen

future but I would like to come here every day. Is it possible for you to transport people?"

"House elves can pop people to other place but need permission to do so." Dobby nodded.

"That's great so if I asked you to 'pop' from Privet Drive to here you could do that." Harry asked and seeing Dobby nod he grinned. "Excellent. Could you 'pop' me to the Chamber of Secrets?" Once again Dobby nodded. "Do you need to be bonded to me or can you stay free?"

"Dobby doesn't need to be bonded but if Harry Potter Sir wants to bond Dobby would agree." Dobby said. "Also when bonded Dobby cannot betray Harry Potter Sir's secrets."

"If I agree to bond with you Dobby there will be some rules that you must follow, do you agree?" Harry said seriously. "First of all you're forbidden to punish yourself in any way. If you did something wrong then we'll talk about it but I will never hurt you; that's a promise. Secondly you will have to wear a uniform. That will show everyone that you're my elf and its better than wearing a tea cozy."

"Dobby agrees." Dobby said while grabbing Harry's hand and a flash of magic successfully bonded the two together.

Harry then explained what he planned to do and how he would call Dobby in the morning so bring him here and bring him back in the evening. He would have to go shopping in coming days; he needed furniture, food, potion ingredients and what not. He also needed to get to Gringotts to set up account that wouldn't lead to him but to his Evan's persona. He would also have to authorize Dobby to take out money so he could do shopping for him.

Seeing that it was getting late Harry asked if Dobby could 'pop' him over to Privet Drive without anyone noticing. Dobby happily obliged and a few seconds later Harry was in his room. Harry marveled at the elf's magic and thanked him once again. He went downstairs hoping that his relatives weren't home yet but he didn't hear the television so he figured they weren't back yet. His suspicions confirmed he went

back upstairs and started packing his stuff. He took all his books and anything related to the magical world and sealed it inside his trunk so he could take it all with him the next day. Only things that would be staying here were some clothes. When he was done he took out a book and started reading while thinking how he could convince the Dursleys to leave him alone. He had an idea in his head and he desperately hoped it would work.

Later that night Harry fell down on his bed feeling very good about himself. He had managed to convince the Dursleys; he had told him that they wouldn't have to worry about him during the day and that he would only be back in the evenings and even then he would be in his room. He went so far as telling them that they didn't have to feed him anymore as he would take care of that on his own and in return he wouldn't have to do chores. The Dursleys eagerly accepted Harry's proposal; the less they saw him the better in their opinion. Though Dudley protested as he was smart enough to realize that if Harry wasn't around to do chores, he would have to do some of them. So Harry went to sleep with a smile on his face and dreams of his own house.

The next morning Harry called Dobby and asked him to move his trunk to the house while he would go for some shopping. Harry had a lot of work ahead of him and the sooner he started to better; so after calling a cab and riding to big city Harry found himself in the busiest shopping center he had ever seen. Harry mentally went over the list of things he needed and decided to go clothes shopping first; he had grown a lot over the past year so he was in need of just about everything.

Not wasting any time he entered the nearest clothes shop and started picking out clothes. About an hour later he exited the shop with several bags of pants, t-shirts, sweaters, underwear and even two pair of shoes. This however proved to be a problem because now he would have to carry all this around so he looked for a place where he could call Dobby. Not finding anything because of the hundreds if not thousands of other people he went inside a public restroom and entered a booth. Quietly he called for his friend and Dobby appeared; luckily the elf seemed to understand that his master was in a Muggle

environment so kept quiet. Few seconds later Harry left the bathroom without his shopping bags and ready to hit the shops again.

The next stop was a furniture store where he bought (as James Evans) a bedroom with a king-sized bed, a large couch, a few chairs, a desk for the office and a few closets. The salesman was very happy with Harry as he worked on commission and this made his day. He promised Harry that everything he ordered would be delivered by the end of the week which was fine by Harry. He gave the address to the man and thanked him for his help.

Next on the agenda was a sports shop; he wanted to change the second building into a small gym where he (and his friends) could exercise. A young woman helped him out and showed him the most standard of work out equipment which Harry liked immediately. He didn't need very fancy stuff just the normal things would do just fine. After she explained how everything worked Harry gave her the address of his home and she put it into the computer telling him that if he paid a little extra fee everything could be delivered the next day. Harry accepted to pay the fee and they would deliver the goods the next day in the afternoon around three o'clock.

Seeing that his shopping in the Muggle world was done Harry left the shopping center and called for Dobby to bring him to Diagon Alley. Once there he went straight to Gringotts so he could set up an account under the name of James Evans. He quickly went inside not wanting anyone to recognize him as he wasn't using his disguise to deal with the Goblins. He knew they wouldn't like being lied to; going straight for a free counter he addressed the Goblin.

"Good day Sir, I would like to open an account?" Harry asked politely.

"Name and specifications?" the Goblin asked not even interested in looking at Harry.

"James Evans and I would like it to be accessible to my elf called Dobby." Harry said quickly; he knew that Goblins didn't care about Wizard business as long as they made money. Goblins didn't like Wizards; in fact they loathed them as they had fought and lost several

wars with them. There was a reason why Prof. Bins spend so much time droning on about the Goblin Wars. To goblins the Wizarding World was everything they despised all in one package. If they had the resources and the change Harry had no doubt that they would wage war upon the Wizarding world again. Luckily they despised Voldemort even more as he crippled the economy with his terror attacks otherwise they might have joined him too. "Also I would like to deposit some money into the account."

The Goblin noted the specification and handed Harry a piece of paper that he needed to sign. He winced when he wrote his name on the dotted line as it drew blood but he had expected that to happen. It was the way Goblins did things; they always signed in blood as to them it was tradition. The Goblin took the paper back and handed Harry the key to his new vault. The number of the key was 1980 which was the same as the year as he was born thus made Harry smile a bit. The Goblin then directed him to the exchange booth where he could exchange Muggle money into Galleons. Harry thanked him for his help and made his way over to the other booth. Exchanging the money didn't take long and although there was a hefty exchange rate Harry had now an extra vault that he could use for buying things that Harry Potter couldn't buy.

Quickly activating his disguise he went on to shop for some potion ingredients and some books. Harry quickly went to the Apothecary where he bought several starters, intermediate and advanced kits for students filled with the most common potion ingredients known to the Wizarding world. For the more rare and expensive ingredients he would send Dobby so he wouldn't raise any suspicion. Next stop was the Cauldron shop where he bought several cauldrons of different sizes. He also bought some self-stirring rods that could be programmed; that way the rods would stir the potion in a correct way and he would be free to do other things. Of course he would have to add the necessary ingredients at the necessary time but that was okay. They did cost a lot of money so he bought only three of them; he would use those for the more complicated potions. Calling Dobby once more he asked the elf to bring everything to the house.

The last stop was at Flourish and Blotts where he bought several new books containing spells and rituals. He figured that having a small

library at his disposal would be an excellent way to get stronger. That's why he bought books on Defense, Transfiguration, Charms and Potions. Also seeing Hermione's face when she saw the library would be worth it; he already had a large number of books in his trunk so he could put those in the library as well. After getting some owl treats for Hedwig at Eeylops Owl Emporium he called Dobby and 'popped' back home.

"Thank you Dobby; you've been a great help." Harry said to the elf.

"Oh Dobby is happy to help Master Harry." Dobby said excited.

Harry looked at his watch and saw that it was about halfway through the afternoon so he decided to leave the rest of the shopping for the next day. He and Dobby then went to the basement where they placed the cauldrons and the potion ingredients on a hastily made shelf. Taking the cauldrons and arranging them by size Harry was thinking about how he would keep the ingredients fresh and stop the made potions from going bad.

"Stupid Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery." Harry said out loud. "If I could do magic things would be much easier."

"Dobby can put spell on Harry Potter Sir so he can do magic." Dobby said hearing his master complain.

"You can do that? Are you sure?" Harry said amazed.

"Dobby can do that; did it for old masters. Elf magic stops 'Trace' spell." Dobby nodded happy that he could help his master.

"How does it work?" Harry asked interested.

"Dobby cast spell at Master and then can use wand no problem." Dobby explained.

Harry nodded and asked Dobby if he could place the spell on him. Dobby just pointed his finger and he shone bright red for a moment before returning to normal. After asking once more if Dobby was sure

this would work Harry used a levitating spell to move a cauldron and then he waited. He knew that if he did underage magic he would get a warning from the Improper Use of Magic Office but nothing happened so he knew he was in the clear. He thanked Dobby and asked him if he would be willing to place the same spell on Hermione when she came over to which Dobby nodded.

With Dobby's help Harry created a sealed stasis room where nothing could go bad. This took only about a fifth of the whole basement so they still had plenty of room to brew the potions. Once everything was set up Harry grabbed his Potion book and looked up the recipe for a 'Pepper-up Potion'. He gathered the ingredients and started preparing everything before starting; he also tried out one of the 'self-stirring' rods by reading the necessary stirs the rod had to be made out loud. To his fascination it worked perfectly; the only thing he needed to do was to add the ingredients at the correct time. Sometime later he had a whole cauldron full of 'Pepper-up Potion' ready to be used. Realizing that he didn't have enough vials to stock everything he put the whole cauldron in the stasis room vowing to buy enough vials later on.

After cleaning up (something that Dobby highly protested against as that was his job) Harry took a quick shower not wanting to smell of potion ingredients when he got back to the Dursleys Dobby 'popped' him back. The rest of the evening Harry occupied himself by reading and preparing for the rest of the summer.

Thank you for reading this chapter and I hope you enjoyed it. Let me know how I did. I have been writing much lately for my Harry Potter story as I suddenly had my Muse back. Result is that my Naruto story is on the back burner for a bit. Also I'm a little lost in how to continue my Naruto story but I'm sure everything will work out fine. Like I said there's no chapter for my Naruto story this week (for those of you who also read it) There will be a chapter next week however so look forward to that.

Next chapter will be out in two weeks so see you guy then.

Chapter 19: Some fun and some feelings

Harry had been back from Hogwarts for over a week now and a lot of things had changed. His house was now furnished and he loved every bit of it; he felt right at home. His bedroom was decorated with a large bed (although he still slept at Privet Drive at nights), a large closet with all his clothes (both Muggle and Wizarding style) and he had used magic to paint the room like he wanted. The living room too had been decorated and it was cozy and relaxing to sit and read a good book. Dobby had been doing a great job on the kitchen and had learned how to use the Muggle equipment thanks to a patient Harry who explained everything.

His small library was his pride though; he had looked up some spell to make it soundproof so no sound came in once you closed the door. He had several bookshelves filled with books although he still had lots of free space. He knew Hermione would be more than willing to fill that space once she got here. There were two large desks with soft chairs that were very comfortable. All in all he had done an excellent job of creating a peaceful, quiet place fit for studying and performing research.

The gym was another thing he was very proud of; he had put everything in the second building that was just a few meters from the main house. He had bought a large amount of mats where he could practice his martial arts without having to worry about injuring himself or his sparring partner. That took about half of the available room and the rest was used to put all the machines. He loved spending some time there every morning. It had become some sort of morning ritual where he exercised and practiced his moves. He was sure Hermione was going to love this place as well.

Speaking of Hermione, she had sent a letter a few days ago from Greece where she was spending the holidays with her parents. Of course half of her letter was filled with her description of how great Greece was and how she had visited Athens and the ancient remains of Acropolis. She had promised to bring him some photos to show him when she came over. She also told him how much she missed him and how she was worried about him being alone at the Dursleys.

She ended the letter by saying that she would be back in the last week of the July and that she expected to see him then.

Harry smiled when he thought of Hermione; he really liked her. She was his best friend and he could trust her completely. She was smart, strong and she was cute as well. He knew that they might be a bit young for relationships but if he was honest he could see a future with the girl. He didn't know if he was in love with her but he was willing to wait and find out. He did know however that if anyone tried to hurt her they would regret it. He remembered how the letter from the future said that he would have a wonderful and smart wife that loved him very much and right now Hermione was the only one who fitted the profile.

Right now however Harry was reading a book on Magical Wards that could protect his house. He wanted to make sure nobody could find him here so Wards were necessary. He had already found a Muggle-repelling ward that he could use. That would keep the Non-Magical people away from the house but he wasn't too worried about Muggles finding him. No, what worried him were Witches and Wizards that wanted to hurt him. He had no doubt that once Voldemort returned his Death Eaters would be ordered to find him. So that's why he was studying the art of Ward building; it was a complicated process to build wards that were strong enough to resist an attack but Harry figured that he could start with a few weak wards and then add stronger Wards later on.

To protect the whole property it wouldn't suffice with just casting the spell; he needed to anchor the ward so that it couldn't dissipate later on. To do that he needed something called "Wardstones"; these specially made stones could be purchased but were very expensive even for Harry. The other way was to make them yourself but that took a lot of time and effort. The process of creating those stones could be found in his book even if the resulting stones would be weaker than bought stones depending on how much magic you poured into them. Still Harry decided to give it a try finding the subject very interesting to say the least. Dobby had also come through again by casting a Ward that distracted anyone from the house. It was a lot like a 'Notice-me-not' charm and it would do for the time being Harry figured.

“Master Harry Potter Sir asked Dobby to inform him when it was time to look at potions.” Dobby said ‘popping’ into the room.

“Ah yes thanks Dobby.” Harry said putting the book down. Over the past few days Harry had been brewing potions by the cauldrons. So far he had made four different potions; Pepper-up, Bruise Healing Paste, Burn Healing Paste and Energy Replenishing Potion. They were fairly easy potions to brew and Harry had all the necessary ingredients in his potion kits. He poured the potions into vials that he then marked by writing the name on it and stored it into the ‘The Room’ as he had started calling the stasis room. He hadn’t started on the more complicated potions until Hermione was there to help him; he didn’t want the potion to blow up in his face after all.

He took a quick look at the remaining ingredients and saw that he still had more than enough to brew another batch of potions the next day. He went back upstairs and went to sit on the veranda; he loved sitting in the sun enjoying the warmth. Not feeling like reading on Wards anymore he took a pillow and placed it on the wooden floor of the veranda before sitting down on it. He closed his eyes and relaxed entering a meditative state. He had wanted to upgrade his Occlumency Shields for quite some time now but he never seemed to find the time to do it. Today he would work on that; his mind and secrets were protected by four shields. A shield that would alert him of any trespassing and three shields each one stronger than the other. The first shield didn’t need any upgrading since it didn’t protect anything; the second shield protected the memories of everyday things like what he had eaten that day and non important things like that.

Although that shield didn’t protect anything important it didn’t mean that Harry was going to allow anyone to see those memories. The shield was single layered at the time so another layer wouldn’t hurt; creating another layer sounded easy but it was actually a lot of work. It was like you weaved a blanket made out of magical threads; you started from only a few threads and started intertwining them piece by piece creating a pattern and eventually a shield. When he started with Occlumency this took forever but now he was used to it so it went quite fast. A few hours later (not that he realized how much time had

passed) he finished weaving the shield and he fused it together with his first shield therefore doubling its strength.

When he opened his eyes he noticed that it was getting dark and he was amazed that he had spent so much time in meditation. He didn't regret it however as he always felt more relaxed after meditating. He went inside to find Dobby knowing that the little elf had already prepared dinner for him. Dobby proved to be an excellent cook once he understood how the Muggle kitchen worked. Things like the microwave oven weren't used as he did that by magic but the furnace was met with great amazement. Harry did have to explain that he couldn't use magic when an electrical utility was switched on as it would destroy it. Magic seemed to have a quarrel with electrical machinery once it was switched on but it didn't destroy them when switched off.

Each day after dinner Dobby 'popped' Harry back to the Dursleys where he filled his evenings with reading and/or writing down new spells that he wanted to learn. That gave him the idea to make some targets that he could use to fire spells at. He would look into that later on.

A few days later Harry wandered around in London looking for a place where he could buy some mannequin dolls. He had come up with the idea while shopping for food the day before; mannequin dolls were used to display clothes in shops but Harry would use them for target practice. Those dolls were shaped like real people and were realistic in height thus making them excellent targets. Unfortunately they were also very expensive to buy new so he was looking for a store where you could buy them second-hand. After some asking around in clothes shops he had gotten the address of a place who sold damaged and repaired dolls.

Harry had some difficulty finding the shop as it was small and tucked away in an alley away from the other shops. He went inside and called for the owner of the place, a certain Mr. Jones. He heard someone replying and waited patiently while browsing the store. There were dozens of different mannequin dolls but Harry only needed a couple of them and he didn't really care what they looked like.

“How may I help you?” Mr. Jones said from behind the counter.

“Mr. Jones I presume?” Harry asked receiving a nod. “I’m looking for a couple mannequins that are sturdy and hard to damage.”

Mr. Jones asked if Harry had any preferences towards the model of the doll to which Harry replied that he didn’t. He was then shown three dolls (one female and two male) that were created out of a hard and sturdy plastic. Mr. Jones insured him that they would be hard to break or damage and that he had acquired them from a shop that had closed down a few months ago. They didn’t come cheap but they were still a lot cheaper than brand new ones. Harry nodded and bought them saying that he would take them with him today. Mr. Jones eagerly accepted the money and helped Harry put them outside so that Harry’s car could pick them up. Little did the man know that the supposed car was none other than Dobby who ‘popped’ Harry and the dolls to the house.

Harry then used the rest of the morning by casting a few spells on the dolls to improve their durability. He cast a ‘Unbreakable Charm’ on them and then placed them in the right position by casting a ‘Sticking Charm’ on the floor and the feet of the dolls so they wouldn’t fall over every time a spell impacted. Once that was done he took out his Spell book and started practicing casting his spells. He had a great time combining several spells together in a rapid succession. This quickly became one of his favorite pastimes at the house.

While Harry was busy mutilating the dolls Hermione was sitting in a chair beside the pool of the hotel they were staying in. So far she had a great time visiting with her parents but she was also very distracted. She missed Harry a lot and she found herself thinking about him quite often. She missed his presence and the sound of his voice. She was getting annoyed at the fact that no matter how much she tried she always started thinking about him. Hermione was almost 11 months older than he was and she had entered puberty much earlier than him. During their time together she had gotten very attached to the boy. She blushed when she thought back at the times she had stared at him during the rituals they performed. Seeing Harry without a shirt on was something she could get used to she thought.

“Hermione sweetie is something wrong?” Her mother asked her.

“What? Oh no everything’s fine mum.” Hermione quickly said not wanting to talk about it with her mother.

“Come off it Hermione; you know you can’t lie to me.” Emma said not wanting to budge on the subject. She had noticed that Hermione tended to space out a lot and that was something she wasn’t used of her daughter.

“It’s nothing mum. I’m just worried about Harry.” Hermione said trying to sound nonchalant.

“Oh I see.” Emma smirked; she had wondered when this was going to happen. “Hermione, do you like Harry?”

“W-What kind of question is that?” Hermione stuttered.

“Oh I don’t know; you seem to be thinking about him a lot lately.” Emma said smiling. “Talk to me honey; maybe I can help.”

“Ugh fine. I like Harry. There I said it; now you can make fun of me.” Hermione said with tears in her eyes.

“Oh ‘Mione why would I make fun of you for liking Harry?” Emma said giving her little girl a hug.

“Isn’t that what parents do when their children say they like someone?” Hermione said laughing a bit.

“Well, I won’t deny that I might tease you a bit but I would never make fun of you.” Her mother said. “Now tell me about how you feel for Harry.”

Hermione nodded and told her mother what she liked so much about Harry and how great she felt when he was around. She also said that she was worried that Harry didn’t like her back or that she wasn’t good enough for him. Her mother quickly told her that she should never talk about herself like that and if Harry couldn’t see what a

wonderful girl she was then he didn't deserve her. She also told her mother that she didn't know if Harry was interested in a relationship since he was only 13 at the moment.

"Hermione, you shouldn't force things with Harry." Emma said softly. "Be his friend like you've been for the past two years. If he likes you then you'll notice it. Trust me a boy can't hide it when he likes a girl."

"So you think I shouldn't tell him yet?" Hermione asked uncertain.

"Not directly but there's nothing wrong with showing him how you feel every once in a while." Emma said. "You know; give him a hug or a small kiss on the cheek."

"I can do that." Hermione said enthusiastically.

"Just don't overdo it or you might scare him away." Emma warned her daughter. "You have to remember that Harry isn't all that used to affection. He's been doing better but do you remember how he acted the first few days he stayed at our place?"

Hermione nodded; Harry had been surprised at how affectionate Hermione's parents were with each other. Contrary to the Dursleys they hugged and kissed each other quite often and it was somewhat strange to him. Hermione had then explained that this was how people who love each other act and he hadn't mentioned it again. Still she could see him getting uncomfortable when he saw them kissing or hugging.

"Now I think I'll keep this our little secret for the time being okay?" Emma said.

"Thanks Mum, you're the best." Hermione said giving her a hug happy that she wouldn't tell her Dad. She was sure that he would tease her a lot more if he knew how she felt about Harry.

When Harry arrived in his room that night he noticed that he had a visitor. A tired, battered old owl was waiting for him holding out his leg to show he had a letter. Harry took the letter before giving the owl

some water and a few owl treats. He opened the letter and noticed he didn't recognize the handwriting.

Dear Harry,

It's Ginny Weasley. I hope Errol arrived safely at your home (he's very old) and delivered my letter to you. First of all I would like to thank you for saving my life. My mum told me you were the one who got me out of the Chamber of Secrets so thank you very much. I owe you a life-debt. I would also like to apologize for creating all this mess; if I hadn't written in that diary all of this wouldn't have happened. It's just that I didn't know that the dairy was cursed. I hope you can forgive me.

I'm feeling a lot better thanks to spending some time with my family. My brothers are very nice to me but I wonder for how long. Don't worry I know they love me and I love them just as much. I also have some great news. My dad entered us in a competition and guess what? We won! We will spend the last week of July till the last week of August in Egypt. Normally we couldn't afford such a trip but the prize money was more than enough to pay for it.

Anyway my mum is calling me for lunch so I'll finish the letter here. Thanks for reading and see you at Hogwarts.

Love,

Ginny Weasley

Harry read the letter and was kind of surprised that she had written him. All throughout the year she had been too shy to even talk to him; he figured Mrs. Weasley had helped her writing. Still it was a nice thing to do but it irked him that she didn't even mention Hermione once. After all he couldn't have done it with his best friend's help. He would write her back later on and sent the letter with Errol back tomorrow. He could tell that the owl wouldn't survive the trip if he didn't let him rest.

The next morning Harry was training in his gym; he lifted weights, did push- and sit-ups, did 10 miles on the bike before starting working on

his marital arts. He liked the feeling of the work out; it made him feel satisfied with himself. After lunch he would study a bit and work on his homework before destroying his target dolls (figuratively as they were charmed to be unbreakable) for an hour. After finishing his lunch he quickly wrote a letter back to Ginny and asked Dobby to attach it to Errol's leg (who was still resting at Privet Drive).

He finished his Charms homework and had started on the homework Snape had given them. He didn't mind the homework too much since he had more than enough time to finish it. With no chores to do and more than enough books to help him homework was a breeze. For the rest of the afternoon he focused his effort on his Occlumency and strengthening his shields.

Errol, the poor owl had used the last of his strength to reach The Burrow; luckily the boy had let him rest before sending a reply but even then it took all of the bird's strength to get home. He dropped on the dinner table scaring Molly Weasley so badly she let out a loud scream alerting her family. Her sons stormed down the stairs ready to defend their home from whatever had attacked them. Molly blushing admitted that it was only Errol.

Ginny Weasley who had been hiding in the living room raced into the kitchen when she heard that Errol was back; that blasted bird better be bringing a reply from Harry she thought. She pushed past her brothers and grabbed the poor bird. She smiled when she saw a letter attached to his leg. She snatched it off and flew upstairs not wanting the rest to read her letter. She barricaded herself in her room and jumped on her bed tearing open the envelope. She quickly started reading the letter her hero had written.

Ginny,

First of all thank you for the letter. I'm glad to hear that you're doing better after such a horrible experience. You don't have to thank me for saving you as I was only doing the right thing. That being said I have to tell you that I don't deserve all the credit. I couldn't have saved you with the help of my best friend Hermione Granger. Throughout the year she has been the one who was the most worried about you. I don't know anything about you having a life-debt to me

but if you owe me a life-debt because I saved you then I think you have a life-debt to Hermione too. Though I'm not sure how this life-debt thing works.

I hope you have fun in Egypt. Enjoy yourself and say hello to your family for me.

Harry

Ginny frowned while reading the letter; this wasn't what she had expected. While she was thankful that he had replied she was hoping that it would be a bit more romantic. After all didn't the hero always fall in love with the damsel in distress? The whole letter was anything but romantic and he couldn't shut up about Hermione. What was so special about the girl anyway? Sure she was smart and somewhat cute if you liked the bookish type of girl but other than that? Ginny didn't like this at all; she had a rival for Harry's love she was sure of it. Well she wouldn't give up on her hero without a fight. It wasn't that she disliked Hermione or anything like that; on the contrary she liked her a lot. And if what Harry said was true she owed her a Life-debt but she had better stay away from Harry or the gloves would come off.

Thank you for reading and let me know how it was. I think I did a good job and we finally see some of the feeling Harry and Hermione have for each other. It won't be happening straight away but it's a start isn't it? Well, see you guys soon.

Chapter 20: A birthday and an escape

Hermione Granger was happy to be back home. It wasn't that she didn't like travelling with her parents but after three weeks of spending time with them she was looking forward to talk with someone else. She was definitely looking forward to seeing Harry again and she wondered what he had been doing over the past three weeks. Thinking about Harry she blushed a bit; her mother had sent her father to the beach while she and Hermione would have 'a girl's day out' as she called. Her father had disappeared at the speed of light at hearing those words. Hermione laughed at seeing her father reacting like that but a moment later she wished she had gone with him. Her mother told her to sit down so they could have a talk; not just any talk but THE talk. She had never been more embarrassed in her entire life. Hearing you mother talk about sex and the do's and don'ts was just too much.

They had arrived late last night and tired of flying she had slept like a baby. Currently she was unpacking her stuff throwing all her dirty clothes in the hamper when she heard a small 'pop' behind her. She turned around and saw a familiar house elf standing there dressed in what she thought was a Muggle butler styled uniform. It was rather fetching and the elf seemed to like it as well.

"Dobby? What are you doing here?" Hermione asked.

"Master Harry Potter Sir sends Dobby to check on Miss Grangey." Dobby proudly said.

"Master Harry Potter Sir?" Hermione asked bewildered.

"Oh yes Dobby is bonded to Harry Potter Sir." Dobby said puffing out his chest. Or at least he tried to so.

Hermione wasn't too happy to hear that Harry would condone slavery; she had researched how House elves were bonded to a Witch or Wizard and most of the elves were treated worse than slaves. She would have a few words about that with Harry. However

she knew that Harry wouldn't just enslave Dobby like that since he knew how she felt about it.

"Harry Potter Sir asks if Miss Grangey is free to visit new house." Dobby asked her.

Hermione nodded; her parents were already at work and she would be alone for the rest of the day. She asked Dobby to wait for a few minutes so she could get ready. She quickly put on some fresh clothes and looked in the mirror to adjust her hair. Giving up on it after a few minutes she was ready to go. Dobby grabbed her hand and with a small 'pop' the Granger house was empty. They reappeared just inside the wards past the gate and Dobby said that she would have to walk the rest of the way. Hermione shrugged and followed the path; she was impressed with what she had seen so far. Her jaw dropped however when she saw Harry sitting on the veranda of a huge house. It took Harry calling her before she started walking again.

"Harry, this place is unbelievable." She exclaimed loudly.

"It's nice to see you too Hermione." Harry laughed before giving her a firm hug.

"Oh I'm sorry Harry. I missed you too." She said returning the hug. Secretly she was very surprised when he hugged her; he almost never initiated psychical contact.

"So what do you think?" Harry said breaking the hug and turning to the house.

"What do I think?" Hermione said amazed. "I think it absolute fantastic. Is this really your house?"

Harry laughed before dragging her inside so he could give her a tour of the house. It took them an hour to see the house and Hermione still had trouble believing it. Harry led her to the veranda where Dobby was serving some drinks and snacks for the two teens. Harry then started to explain what he had done over the past few weeks

and Hermione was very impressed. But she had several things to say as well.

“Wait a minute; how did you do all this without using magic?” Hermione asked him.

“Who said I didn’t use magic?” Harry said grinning.

“You used magic?” Hermione yelled. “Harry, they’re going to expel you for using magic. How could you so stupid?”

It took Harry ten minutes before she had calmed down enough so he could tell her about the spell Dobby had used on him. Of course Dobby had to explain as well before she practically ordered him to cast the spell on her as well. Harry said that he had already asked Dobby to do so once they told her about it. One quickly cast spell later Hermione was levitating Harry across the veranda. She let him down after a few minutes of laughter so that Harry could continue his story.

Harry then told her about the Potion Lab in the basement, ‘the Room’, the gym and the target dolls and Hermione couldn’t wait to see everything. So he showed her the basement first and she was very interested in the self-stirring rods. She too saw the use of them and wondered why not more people used them until Harry said how much they had cost. She was very impressed with the amount of Potions he had made so far. The stasis room aka ‘the Room’ was another thing that showed Harry’s brilliance when it came to thinking ahead.

The gym looked neat and she promised Harry that she would join him in the mornings so she would remain fit as well. She absolutely loved the target dolls and together they spend some time blasting spells at the targets. They had a great time and went back to the veranda to talk some more.

“So what else have you been working on?” Hermione asked him.

“Well, the last two weeks I’ve been working on my Occlumency. I fortified my shields with an extra layer and I’m thinking of putting a third layer as well.” Harry told her.

"That's not a bad idea so I might do that as well; anything else?" she said.

"Nothing much really; I've also started writing down spell combos that we could practice." Harry said while drinking a bit of Dobby home-made lemonade. "And I also worked a bit on my animagus transformation."

"Really, any progress?" Hermione asked a bit jealous. She hadn't had any time to dedicate on meditating during the trip with her parents.

"A bit but not all that much." Harry said carefully. "Don't worry 'Mione, you can meditate all day long starting tomorrow. You'll catch up in no time."

The two of them spend the rest of the week together while Hermione's parents were off to work. They brewed several more potions, worked on their condition and martial arts, cast spells at the targets and meditated. Harry had finished building a third layer on every shield while Hermione had almost finished her second layer. Their minds would be very well protected by the end of the summer. They also worked on their animagus forms and Hermione had finally seen her form.

It turned out that she was a lynx; a large cat like animal with thick fur and Hermione loved her form instantly. She confessed that she always wanted a cat but her parents wouldn't let her. She raced to the library to find out if there were any books present about her form but to her disappointment there weren't any. She would have to look it up at home.

Harry too had made some excellent progress with his form. The leopard was now sitting halfway between the bushes and Harry meaning that Harry was halfway there. The leopard looked at Harry while he was talking and it seemed to be very interested in what Harry had to tell.

Today however there would be no training or exercising; today was a day for fun and laughter. It was now 31th of July meaning that it was

Harry's birthday. Hermione had told him to wait at the Dursley's where she and her parents would pick him up early in the morning. Thus Harry was standing outside waiting feeling a little nervous but also very happy. This was the second birthday he would celebrate with his best friend and he was curious what she had planned.

When the Granger's car entered Privet Drive Harry stood up and waved. Soon the car came to a stop and the doors opened; Harry found himself in a bear hug by both Hermione and Emma. They wished him a very happy birthday. He thanked them and let him be pushed into the car. After shaking Dan's hand and thanking him as well the car left Privet Drive none of them looking back.

"So Harry, are you ready for a whole day of fun?" Emma asked him.

"You bet." Harry should with a huge smile. "Thank you so much for this."

"Wait till you see where we're headed. I'm sure you'll love it." Hermione said excited.

"Okay now you're making me even more curious." Harry laughed.

The car ride didn't take very long as traffic wasn't that bad; Dan said that this was surprising for the time of the day. Harry had been peering out the window trying to see where they were headed but so far he didn't recognize anything. Then all of the sudden Hermione took out a blindfold and he was ordered to wear it. Of course he played along and put it on not wanting to ruin the surprise they had prepared for him. A few minutes later he felt the car stop and Hermione grabbed his hand to guide him out of the car. They positioned him in the right direction and told him to take off the blindfold which he hastily did. His jaw dropped when he saw the sign of 'LEGOLAND' and he turned to the Grangers.

"Do you like it?" Hermione asked a bit worried.

"It's great. I mean I never played with LEGO before but Dudley had some when he was younger." Harry said turning back to the sign.

Dan and Emma frowned at hearing those words and Hermione was seriously thinking of hurting the Dursleys. Not wanting to ruin the party she quickly forgot about it and grabbed Harry's hand and dragged him to the ticket booth with her parents following.

Once inside they took a quick look at the map and decided on a trajectory that they would follow. They had a whole day to visit the park so they weren't in any hurry. Emma had already taken several photos that she would give to Harry so he could add them to his album. The first visit was to the 'Creation Centre' where Harry watched in amazement at how the people of the park build models with LEGO. He thought it was absolutely brilliant to make such complicated models with toys.

The next stop was 'Miniland' where the four of them had a great time visiting the models of famous landmarks from all over the world. Harry and Hermione posed next to the Big Ben, the St Paul's Cathedral and Trafalgar Square to name a few. Emma was glad she had several rolls of film with her as she took photos by the dozen. She smiled at her husband seeing that they had succeeded in giving Harry a good day for his birthday.

They skipped 'Duplo land' as it was more focused on the younger children and went straight for LEGO City. There they watched stunts being performed before boarding the Orient Expedition, a train ride that takes visitors around Lego City, Traffic and Adventure Land, with safari animals constructed of Lego placed along the track. Harry loved every bit of it and it showed in his enthusiasm whenever he saw something new.

When the train ride finished it was close to lunch time so they went to one of the many restaurants in the park and enjoyed a good meal together. They even sang 'Happy Birthday' to Harry, which made him blush a bit as there were a lot of people in the restaurant but nobody made any notion of hearing it. Harry thanked them once more and told them that this was the best birthday present ever.

After lunch the tour continued and they visited 'The Land Of The Vikings' where they did a water attraction which was great fun, then they went on to 'Wild Woods' where they entered a labyrinth filled

with walkways, chutes and scramble nets while having to solve clues to find the exit. The last visit of the day was 'Adventure Land' with a huge roller coaster much to Emma's and Hermione's dismay. When they exited the park Harry was tired but very happy.

By the time the car left the parking lot both Harry and Hermione were fast asleep after a whole day of running around and excitement. Dan and Emma were less tired because they followed at a much slower pace but they too were exhausted. Nonetheless they were content knowing that Harry had enjoyed his birthday. When they arrived at Privet Drive Emma woke the two kids up and said their goodbyes. Emma also promised to give him the pictures that she had taken throughout the day. Harry nodded before giving her a big hug thanking her and Dan for the great day.

"You're very welcome Harry." They both said.

Hermione walked up to him and they hugged each other a good night. They had already agreed to see each other the next day so they could talk later. A few hours later both of them were dreaming of the day they had had and never slept better.

Miles away from both Harry and Hermione a certain Sirius Black was making plans; he had to find Harry Potter and tell him the truth. He knew this would be easier said than done; no doubt the boy had been told lie after lie about him. Not to mention he was an escaped criminal wanted by both the Muggle and Wizarding world. Still he had to try; he had done the impossible by escaping from Azkaban so there was no way he was giving up now. First of all he had to find some decent food and clothes and then he would start on the next part of his plan. He knew he had to hurry because once they would notice his empty cell the hunt would begin. Luckily for him he had several aces up his sleeves. Black disappeared into the night hoping his escape would remain unnoticed for a few more hours.

It turned out that Black was lucky as they only discovered his escape the next morning when the prison guards found an empty cell. They immediately raised the alarms and Azkaban went into a complete lockdown. This however served Sirius even more since they lost time

by looking for him at Azkaban before realizing that he had somehow managed to leave the island. They quickly send word to the authorities and soon the whole ministry was filled with chaos.

The minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge wasn't one of the brightest wizards around and it would surprise many people that he even made it to be Minister if they knew just how much of an idiot the man truly was. The man had barely passed his OWL and NEWT tests but thanks to some very powerful friends in high places he had risen through the ranks and ultimately became Minister of Magic. As long as things were peaceful Fudge could handle most of things but he still relied on Dumbledore for advice. He frequently sends an Owl with questions to the Headmaster who was always prepared to help him out. Now however he was facing a crisis of unforeseen magnitude and it scared him witless. As soon as the news reached him he grabbed some Floo powder and went to Hogwarts; he had a special Floo connection to the Headmaster's office which allowed him access if Dumbledore was there. Stepping out of the green fire he fell down in a chair and sighed loudly.

"Cornelius?" Dumbledore said wondering what the man needed now.

"This is disaster Albus. I'm done for; it's over." The man wailed.

"Calm yourself Cornelius and tell me what is going on." Dumbledore said sighing. "Here, take a lemon drop. I've always found them quite soothing."

"For god's sake Albus this isn't the time to enjoy candy." Fudge exclaimed. "Sirius Black has escaped from Azkaban."

Now this was surprising even to Albus Dumbledore. To his knowledge nobody had ever escaped Azkaban before; the prison was said to be impossible to escape. Realizing the seriousness of the situation he stood up and strolled to one of his cupboards where he held some very nifty gadgets. One of those gadgets was a monitor of the blood wards on Privet Drive; it showed him that the wards were at full power meaning that nobody with ill intentions could make it past them. Sirius Black wouldn't be able to reach Harry so Dumbledore was satisfied.

"What are you doing?" Fudge asked curiously.

"I'm just checking the wards on Mr. Potter's home and I can safely say that Harry isn't in any danger." Dumbledore smiled.

"But what about Black? Surely he would try to find the Potter boy?" Fudge said frustrated that Dumbledore didn't seem to be too worried.

"Those wards are amongst the strongest wards I have ever seen." Dumbledore explained. "Nobody, not even Voldemort himself would be able to find Harry or break past those wards. So Harry is quite safe."

"What do you suggest I do?" Fudge said asking for help.

"If I were you Cornelius I would send my Aurors out to find Sirius Black. Track down every clue you might hear or get and tell the people to remain vigilant." The headmaster aided him.

"Alright thank you Albus, I'll get right on it." Fudge said before stepping back into the fire returning to the Ministry of Magic.

Albus Dumbledore sighed loudly; he knew it would be a long day for him. No doubt everyone would ask for his advice on capturing Black. He closed the cupboard and went downstairs to get some breakfast. He wouldn't be surprised if the Daily Prophet had already been delivered with the news about Black's escape.

The morning after his birthday Harry woke up feeling very good; he had wonderful friends and he considered Dan and Emma as some form of foster parents. So with a smile on his face he got dressed before calling Dobby who promptly showed up and 'popped' them to the house. He went straight for the gym and started his workout like he did every morning. He knew Hermione would arrive any minute thanks to Dobby.

“Good morning Harry.” Hermione greeted him once she entered the gym.

“You too ‘Mione. Thanks again for the great day yesterday.” Harry said greeting her.

“Don’t mention it Harry; I had a lot of fun too.” She said smiling.

They then went through their usual routine and finished two hours later. They each took a shower and changed into a fresh set of clothes that Dobby had laid out for them. Initially Hermione had been opposed to Dobby being bonded to Harry but once Harry explained the deal he had made with the elf and Dobby had insured her that this was what he wanted she accepted the fact. She could see how useful Dobby was as he ‘popped’ her over the house and back every day.

Harry had also send Dobby to Diagon Alley for shopping and it was a very safe way to shop. Dobby could also visit other Wizarding towns and shop there; that’s how they had gotten several ingredients that would have been hard to acquire without asking question. The British Wizarding world was less advanced compared to the American or Australian Wizarding world where things went much smoother. While the British Ministry of Magic tried to control everything by politics and desperately tried to control what kind of magic was Light and what was Dark, the other Ministries were less constricting though they still had many rules to follow. The difference was that some of the things that were considered Dark in Britain were freely available somewhere else.

For example the ingredients for Polyjuice Potion or Veritaserum where heavily restricted in Britain but could be found in almost every potion shop in America. It wasn’t just potion ingredients but also books with spells and rituals that were forbidden or frowned upon could be purchased without trouble. This was something Voldemort took great advantage of; he could get anything he wanted from outside the country while the Light side got stuck with spells and potions that didn’t stand a chance.

Harry had given Dobby a list of subject that he wanted books of and the elf had returned with several large tomes saying that the man

behind the counter had selected them. One of the books had several rituals Harry and Hermione had taken an interest in. There had been a 'fire-protection ritual', a 'skin-hardening ritual' and a ritual to increase speed and strength by a good twenty percent. These rituals were definitely on the 'To Do' list. They were fairly straight forward although they needed a lot of preparation time.

At Hermione's request Dobby also picked up the newspapers including the Daily Prophet saying she wanted to know what was happening in the world. Harry had long given up on the nonsense the Daily Prophet printed; he was sick of reading the biased articles and more than once he wondered if any of the reporters actually did any investigating. He had known that the Wizarding world was filled with bigots, Voldemort being the more extreme of them but some others weren't far behind. He had read how people like Werewolves were treated by those so called Purebloods and frankly they deserved to be shot for how they treated them. Nobody wanted to be a Werewolf; it was a curse inflicted on people by others willingly or unwillingly. They shouldn't be discriminated because they're dangerous one day in the month.

"Oh my god; Harry, it says here that Sirius Black has escaped from Azkaban." Hermione said worried.

"Really? How did he manage that?" Harry said impressed.

"It doesn't say but this is bad. Aren't you afraid he's going to come after you?" Hermione asked him.

"Not really; it's not like he know where this house is and according to Dumbledore Privet Drive is protected by wards." Harry shrugged. "Besides I would like to meet him."

"WHAT? Why would you like to meet the man who betrayed your parents?" Hermione exclaimed loudly.

"Look 'Mione; according to the stories Prof. McGonagall told me, my dad and Sirius were the best of friends." Harry said. "She even said they were practically brothers. I find it hard to believe that my dad

wouldn't notice if his best friend, someone he had known for years, was a traitor."

"But..." Hermione said trying to say something.

"I'm not saying it's not possible he was a traitor but I would like to know the truth." Harry shrugged. "Did you know that Sirius never had a trial? They just arrested him and threw him in Azkaban, never asking what had happened."

"So you think he's innocent?" Hermione said.

"I don't know but it seems to me that asking him directly is the only way to find out." Harry nodded. "Still that's no reason to get careless so we better stay focused. I'll ask Dobby to keep an eye on me during the night when I'm at Privet Drive."

Satisfied that Harry wasn't going to look for the man and would be careful Hermione dropped the matter. She knew Harry was sensitive about the night he lost his parents and maybe if he could talk to Sirius they might find out what truly happened that night. Still she couldn't help but worry about her best friend.

It had been two weeks since Sirius Black had escaped and he still wasn't found; the aurors used every trick in the book to find him but so far no luck. The people of Wizarding Britain were so scared of the man that they refused to help the aurors in fear that he would come back and kill them. Diagon Alley was deserted as soon as it started to get dark as the Wizards and Witches hid in the safety of their homes.

Sirius had been travelling mostly at night and he had finally reached his destination. In front of him stood Privet Drive number 4 where Harry Potter was staying; it had taken much longer than he thought to get here but he had to be careful. He hid in one of the bushes in the backyard trying to catch a glimpse of Harry once the morning came.

In his room Harry was peacefully sleeping with a dedicated House elf standing guard next to his bed. Dobby had only been too happy to accept the task his master had given him; he would protect his

master with his life if he had to. Nobody would touch Harry Potter Sir as long as Dobby was alive. So far nothing had happened but tonight Dobby felt the presence of another wizard. He popped out of the room and appeared behind the presence he had felt.

Sirius was waiting patiently until Harry went outside. He was in his animagus form, a huge black dog. It was thanks to his animagus ability that he had managed to escape Azkaban and the Aurors that were looking for him. He was pretty sure nobody had seen him so he allowed himself to relax a bit. So imagine his surprise when he heard a pop behind him and a House Elf appeared.

"You is being bad doggy." Dobby said and before Sirius could react he found himself frozen like he was put under a Full-Body bind spell. He was able to see and hear anything but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't break free.

Dobby 'popped' back to Harry's room and alerted his master that he had captured a bad doggy. Harry wondered what the hell Dobby was talking about and asked why Dobby had captured the dog in the first place.

"Doggy has Wizard signature." Dobby said. Harry didn't understand at first until he thought about it and the answer was simple. Sirius Black was an animagus. He quickly got dressed and asked Dobby to 'pop' them to the house. Dobby levitated the frozen Sirius into the gym where Harry told him to free him but be ready to stop him if he did anything that might be considered dangerous. Dobby did as he was asked and freed Sirius from the spell.

"Hello Sirius Black." Harry said calmly.

Well, this ends this chapter with a cliffhanger. I hope everyone enjoyed reading it and that it was up to standards. I especially like writing this chapter because of Harry's birthday present. It was great fun writing about Lego Land. I made me think back about my childhood when I played with Lego. I'm sure most of the guys here have played with Lego as well. It's was definitely one of the best toys I ever had as a child and I could spend hours on end playing with it.

Well, let me know how I did and see you when the next chapter comes out.

Chapter 21: Traitors, truths and end of summer

Sirius Black was caught. Not by the Aurors or the Dementors. No he was caught by a House Elf; if this wasn't such a serious situation he would have laughed his ass off. A House Elf had caught the most wanted man in Britain. Oh how he wished that he was able to rub in the Ministry's face; it would be hilarious he thought. Anyway back to the situation at hand. Here he was standing a few feet from the boy he had been looking for only to be held at wand point and an elf to monitor him. He wondered what the rest of the night would bring him.

"Hello Sirius Black." Harry said calmly. "We finally meet in person. Before we start our conversation I would like to remind you that Dobby here is more than capable of restraining you if necessary."

"No need for that Harry, I'm not here to hurt you." Sirius said softly.

"Then why are you here?" Harry asked him.

"To tell you the truth about who betrayed your parents." Sirius said strongly. "I know it might be difficult for you to trust me but I'm willing to take a magical oath to prove to you that what I'm saying is the truth."

"Don't you need a wand to make such an oath?" Harry said curiously.

"Well yes, that's the problem. You see I don't have a wand at moment." Sirius admitted. To his surprise Harry threw his wand at him and he grabbed it with both hands. "Why did you do that?"

"I trust Dobby with my life; he would never let anyone hurt me." Harry said smiling at his friend. "Go on, take the oath."

"I, Sirius Orion Black do hereby swear on my life and magic that I'll never intentionally hurt Harry James Potter. I also swear on my life and magic that everything I tell him tonight is the truth. So mote it be." Sirius said. A burst of magic showed Harry that the oath had been recognized by magic itself.

"Thank you, now why don't we go somewhere a bit more comfortable." Harry said leaving the gym. Sirius dumbly nodded and followed only to see a huge house next to the building there were in just a moment ago. Harry went inside and sat down in one of the couches in the living room motioning Sirius to do the same.

"You know, I thought you would be scared shitless of me. Instead your calm and collected how is that?" Sirius asked.

"Honestly I was scared but like I said I trust Dobby with my life and if necessary I could defend myself." Harry admitted.

"How? You can't do magic and while I'm not the man I used to be I'm still stronger than you are." Sirius said.

"We'll talk about that later." Harry said showing he wanted to hear Sirius' story first.

"Alright this is a long story so bear with me." Sirius said. "It all started once we, your father and other couple of friends graduated from Hogwarts. At that time Voldemort was at the top of his reign and he thought that everyone who wasn't with him was against him. People were getting killed every day; a terrible time let me tell you. Your parents, I and two other friends joined this organization called 'The Order of the Phoenix'. It was led by none other than Albus Dumbledore and we were trying to help were we could. The Order was a group filled with normal people; teachers, young people, retired men and women but we all had one thing in common. We wanted Voldemort gone." Here Sirius paused to accept a drink from Dobby.

"We were successful and we defeated quite a few Death Eaters along the way. Then you came along. You should have seen your father's face when your mum told him she was pregnant. Poor James fainted." Sirius laughed loudly and Harry too couldn't help but smile. "This is where things started to go downhill. You see months before, a Prophecy was made about a child that would be born with the power to defeat Voldemort. Naturally Voldemort found out about it and he started to search for this child. It didn't take him long to find out that your mother was pregnant and from that day he focused his energy on finding your parents. So your mum and dad went into hiding but

they were found out each time and luckily made it out alive and well. This alerted us that we had a traitor in our midst but unfortunately we didn't have a clue who."

"This continued long after you were born and so far we had been lucky but we all knew our luck would run out at some point. It got so bad that your parents didn't trust the Order anymore and started looking for their own way to protect you. The answer came with the 'Fidelius Charm'; the charm is quite simple actually. It allows someone to hide anything while only the people who are told by the Secret Keeper can find it. It's hard to explain so I'll use an example. Let's say we have three houses nr 6, 7 and 8; to cast the charm you need someone that's called the Secret Keeper and only that person can tell to secret to others. Now if we cast the charm on house nr 7 it would simply disappear and everyone who ever knew about it would forget it ever existed even the people of house nr 6 or 8. But if the Secret Keeper told them about it they would remember everything. Do you understand how it works?"

"I pretty much get it yeah." Harry said immediately interested in the possibilities of that charm.

"So your parents used that charm to hide their house. The only one who could tell the secret to others was the Secret Keeper and they had chosen someone they trusted with their life." Sirius said sadly. "At first I was to be the Secret Keeper but I refused. Not because I didn't want to but because I honestly believed that it was too obvious. James and I had been best friends throughout our time in Hogwarts. Everyone in our year knew that so Voldemort did as well. So I proposed to use one of our other friends called Peter Pettigrew; he was part of our gang and we honestly believed that he would never betray us. As it turned out we made a terrible mistake by choosing him."

"He was the traitor wasn't he?" Harry said guessing what was coming.

"Yes, the little shit had been playing us for over a year. He was always weak and never showed any courage but we never expected he would freely tell Voldemort the secret." Sirius sighed loudly. "The day it happened I went to check on him as he was hiding as well.

When I arrived at the hideout he was gone and I knew what he had done. There were no signs of a battle meaning he went freely. I got to your parent's house as fast as I could only to find your dad lying on the floor." Sirius said crying openly now. "It was the worst thing I ever saw, my best friend was gone and I wasn't able to save him. Then I heard you cry; amazed that you were still alive I went upstairs where I found you with only a nasty cut on your head with your mother lying next to you. Next thing I knew Hagrid arrived and asked me to hand you over so Dumbledore could keep you safe. That's when I made the second biggest mistake of my life. I went after Peter; I wanted revenge for my friends, for the betrayal." Sirius said before pausing a bit so he could calm down a bit.

"I found him the next day in Muggle London where I confronted him in the middle of the street. However I hadn't counted on him being such a sneaky bastard. He yelled out loudly, asking me why I betrayed your parents before he blew up the street killing several Muggles in the process. He then cut off his finger and transformed in his animagus form. His form is a rat by the way. During the confusion he escaped in the sewers and before I could chase him the Aurors arrived and arrested me. When I opened my eyes I was in Azkaban and the rest is history or so they say."

Harry was speechless at hearing Sirius talk; never had he imagined such a thing. What was supposed to be a foolproof plan turned into a disaster because of one man. He could see Sirius blamed himself for the death of his parents but Harry knew that he couldn't blame the man for anything. He had done what he thought best at the time and he couldn't fault him for that. He probably would have acted the same way.

"I'm so sorry Harry; if I hadn't refused to be the Secret Keeper all of this wouldn't have happened." Sirius said sobbing.

"Sirius, it's okay. I don't blame you for any of that and I'm sure my parents don't blame you either." Harry said placing his hand on the man's shoulder.

"But..." Sirius tried to say only to have Harry interrupted him.

"No, we don't know what might have happened and it's futile to think about it." Harry said. "It's in the past Sirius so let's leave it there."

"You certainly have your mother's way of words. Your father never was so good at comforting people." Sirius smiled weakly. "So tell me, what is all this?"

"Before I tell you what has happened to me you need to get cleaned up a little bit. You're a mess." Harry joked before calling Dobby and asking him if he could give Sirius a good scrubbing.

Dobby nodded and levitated Sirius across the room to the bathroom; said victim was shouting that he could wash himself but Dobby ignored him. Harry laughed at Sirius face before getting something to drink. It had been a very emotional night for both of them and he wasn't sure if he could explain it all again when Hermione came in few hours. Half an hour later Sirius entered the living room again looking like a whole new man. He had shaved and washed his hair and frankly if it wasn't for the fact that he was somewhat skinny he looked pretty much alright.

"You know, that was a good prank there." Sirius said glaring at Harry. "That elf is brutal I tell you; but it feels great to be clean again."

"Yeah Dobby is enthusiastic that's for sure." Harry laughed.

"So, are you going to tell me what happened to you?" Sirius asked softly.

"Before I do that I need to know something. Do you know Occlumency?" Harry asked him.

"Occlumency? Sure, I'm not a master or anything but you learn quickly how to shut out the Dementors or else you go crazy in there." Sirius said nodding.

"Good but I still want you to read this." Harry said tossing him his notes on Occlumency. "I can't afford anyone learning my secrets."

"I understand." Sirius said agreeing.

“Very well, it all started on my ninth birthday....” Harry then told him what had happened over the past few years letting out the unimportant stuff. He told him about the letter, about how he trained and prepared, his first year at Hogwarts where he met his best friend and finished with what had happened in second year. Sirius was listening with his jaw wide open; the things his godson had done were out of this world.

By the time Harry had finished his story the sun had come up and it wouldn't be long before Hermione would arrive. He asked Dobby to prepare breakfast for them before he left to take a shower. Sirius was still in a daze and needed some time to process everything. Fifteen minutes later Harry had showered and dressed ready for Hermione's arrival. He asked Sirius to wait until he called him so he could explain things to Hermione. He knew she would freak out if she arrived only to see Sirius Black sitting at the table.

Just like he had predicted Hermione freaked at hearing that Sirius Black had appeared at Privet Drive and it took Harry quite some time to calm her down. He then gave her a short version of what had happened before he called out Sirius. Hermione was worried sick but once she had heard the story she trusted Harry. Sirius entered the room and greeted her very politely and the three of them sat down at the breakfast table. It took a few minutes but Hermione finally had the courage to ask a few questions which Sirius answered without problems.

By the time she had fully understood the story tears were running down her cheeks. It was like a movie but a very tragic and sad one. She jumped at Harry and gave him a hug before turning to Sirius and to his surprise she hugged him too. It seemed she had accepted Sirius into her life quite easily.

“Thank you Hermione but I don't deserve your tears.” Sirius said softly.

“Sirius, I already told you that you don't have to blame yourself for what happened. Do it again and I'll tell Dobby to give you a scrubbing

with an iron sponge.” Harry threatened. Sirius gulped and nodded before whispering something in Hermione’s ear.

“Is he always this pushy?” He asked jokingly.

“Only to people he loves and cares for.” Hermione proudly said.

They then showed Sirius the house and everything that they were doing and he was very impressed. These two kids were better organized than the Order was in his days. Not to mention they had more resources as well. He was a bit worried about the rituals they want to do and already did but one explanation from Harry later he could see the advantage of doing them. He was blown away by the power those two showed when they attacked the target dolls and promised himself not to get on their bad side. These kids were lethal.

“So what are your plans now?” Harry asked his godfather.

“I’ve got me a rat to catch.” Sirius said slamming his fist into his palm.

“You can’t go out there; you’ll get caught.” Hermione said loudly.

“She’s right Sirius besides who knows where Pettigrew is.” Harry agreed.

“I don’t have to look for him. I know exactly where he is.” Sirius said slamming a picture on the table. “He’s right there.” Harry and Hermione’s eyes went wide when they recognized the family in the picture. It was a picture of the Weasley family where they received the prize money they had won.

“You mean Scabbers is Peter Pettigrew?” Harry asked shocked.

“Is that what he’s called? We called him Wormtail in our days.” Sirius nodded. “So the only thing I need to do is get that rat and its payback time.”

“Sirius, calm down and think about this. If you go out there it’s only a matter of time before you get caught. And this time you get the kiss for sure.” Harry argued.

"I'm sorry Pup but I have to do this. I can't let that traitor run free any longer." Sirius said shaking his head.

"I get that and trust me I want him to pay just as much as you do but we have to be smart about this." Harry said loudly. "Look, we know Ronald Weasley. He's in our year and he stays in my dorm. I can get Scabbers way more easily than you can. It's just going to take a little longer. You need to get healthy again so you can help us defeat Voldemort once he's back."

"Harry is right Sirius." Hermione said. "We can't do this alone; we need all the help we can get. Besides do you want to risk losing your godson again?"

"You said you made the second biggest mistake in your life when you chased after Wormtail. Don't make a third one, please." Harry pleaded.

"Oh you're good. Guilt tripping me so I wouldn't leave." Sirius laughed.

"Did it work?" Harry asked.

"Yes pup it worked. I'm not losing you again." Sirius said before grabbing Harry in a tight hug.

The three of them sat down and started to work on a plan of action. First of all Sirius needed to get healthy again but that was easily fixed by brewing some potions and a steady diet. He also needed to get back in shape so they set up a training schedule for him to follow. He desperately needed a wand which proved to be a problem since he couldn't just go to Ollivander's and buy a wand. The solution was found when Sirius remarked that he could get a wand if he managed to get abroad. Harry then called Dobby and asked if he could 'pop' them to America or Australia. Dobby nodded but warned that he only could take one person at a time. He would have to 'pop' three times if they all wanted to go. That didn't matter at all to them so later that week when Sirius was a bit better they would get him a wand in America or Australia.

Hermione also started to take notes of the spells they would learn during their third year. They were going to perform the ritual that would seal off a part of their magic; by doing that they would force their magic core to get stronger. This ritual didn't have immediate result but even Sirius agreed that it was worth it. In fact he would have done it but it was only possible between the ages of 13 and 17. She quickly found that they already knew a lot of spells that they would be seeing this year thanks to their studying. The ritual would have to be performed this week because it would leave them magically weak for about a week. After that they would get used to the seal and they could use magic freely again.

On the day of the ritual Sirius wasn't allowed to stay and watch since they would have to draw runes on their bodies again. Hermione who wasn't looking forward to being half-naked in front of Harry (even if he wouldn't be able to see anything) refused to let Sirius stay. He smirked and was about to tease her but one look from Harry told him it wasn't a good idea. He nodded telling them that he would wait outside just in case something went wrong.

Dobby had cleared the basement and put all potion material on the side so Harry had enough space to draw the rune circle for the ritual. This one had been the most complicated he had ever drawn and it had taken him three days to do it. Double-checking everything he nodded to Hermione saying that everything was in order; all they had to do now was carved the necessary seal on their body. The seal wasn't all that big; it was about the size of baby fist put it had to be place straight above the heart. This meant that they had to be shirtless to proceed which was why the both of them were so embarrassed about it. Harry would undergo the ritual first so Hermione prepared the seal for him. The seal was actually a small circle with runes so it took some time to carve it into his flesh. She was also a bit distracted by seeing Harry shirtless and she had to admit that Harry looked great. The training they had been doing definitely paid off in her opinion. Once she was done with the seal she stepped back and let Harry recite the long spell that activated the ritual. Harry felt the effect of the seal almost instantly; it was like he had cast spells for hours on end but other than that he was fine. The seal became invisible and the wounds were already healed.

Harry stood and smiled to Hermione showing her that he was fine; he knew she was a bit worried about performing this ritual. She nodded and told him to turn around which he quickly did. She took off her shirt and held it over her chest making sure she covered everything that needed to be covered. She told him that it was alright to turn and blushed when he looked at her. Harry promised himself not to stare at her so quickly got to work. Gently he carved the seal in her skin; he couldn't hide his blushing however and deep inside Hermione was very happy that she had this effect on him. Still she would have preferred to wait a bit to find that out. Harry too had some problem concentrating at the beginning but soon got over it and finished the seal; after checking if everything was ok he nodded before leaving the circle so she could complete the ritual as well. Once they got dressed they called in Sirius to tell him everything went fine before going to bed. Dobby quickly 'popped' Hermione home so she could rest.

The last week and a half the three of them spend by resting, planning and having a great time. Sirius loved the two kids like they were his own but he still would be very glad to have an adult to talk with. Harry promised him that he would search out Remus Lupin, the fourth and final member of the Marauders so he would have some company if Lupin joined their group. Sirius had gotten a wand and had started relearning his magic. He loved thrashing the target dolls just as much as Harry and Hermione did; it proved to be an excellent stress reliever.

On the evening before the first of September Harry (Hermione did it that afternoon) said his goodbyes. Harry would spend the night at Hermione's and go to King's Cross Station with her. Harry secretly ordered Dobby to keep an eye on Sirius and stop him from leaving the property. Dobby nodded saying that he would take care of it. Sirius made them promise to write and raise some hell on Snape which sounded a very good idea to Harry but he was sure Hermione would disapprove. Dobby then 'popped' Harry to Privet Drive where the Grangers would pick him up. As he sat waiting for the Grangers to arrive Harry couldn't help but wondered what fate had in store for him this year.

Thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed it. This chapter concludes the summer holiday between the second and third year so next chapter will be the start of Harry and Hermione's third year at Hogwarts. I have some ideas that I'm working with so look forward to reading them. See you all in two weeks for the next chapter.

Chapter 22: Start of third year

The trip to King's Cross Station went smoothly and Harry and Hermione were eager to get to Hogwarts. They had a ton of projects to do and they couldn't wait to get started. The summer had been very fulfilling to Harry and he was happier than ever. He had his best friend on his side and now his godfather too had joined their little group. Once they had proved his innocence Sirius would be able to help out even more. For the time being he was getting better and writing down things they had done during the first war as well as the name of any Death Eater he remembered. Harry had asked him to do that so they would have an estimate of how many men Voldemort could have when he came back. Sirius would also work on ideas and thanks to Dobby they could easily contact each other by letters.

Once they passed the barrier that separated the Muggle world and the Wizarding world Harry got surrounded by a red-haired group of people. It didn't take long to realize that it was the Weasleys who had just arrived as well. Molly Weasley grabbed Harry in a hug saying he looked way too thin and that next summer he should come to the Burrow so she could put some meat on those bones. Hermione and Emma frowned at the woman's rambling each for their own reasons. Hermione because she thought Harry was just fine the way he was and Emma because Molly seemed to be smothering poor Harry like he was her own son when she hardly knew him.

When Harry finally escaped Mrs. Weasley's hug he was taken to the side by Mr. Weasley who warned him for Sirius Black and asked him not to search for him no matter what he heard about the man. Harry quickly reassured that he had no reason to search for the man (which was the truth as he knew exactly where to find him) and that he would be careful. Harry did find it weird that people warned him about Sirius but they never told him why he would be after Harry in the first place. It seemed so typical to him; keep him in the dark and he couldn't do anything he shouldn't. This was something that infuriated him; it was the same thing with the Prophecy. Sirius had told him about the Prophecy even though he only knew half of it; now he understood what his future self had meant that it was his destiny to fight Voldemort. In the end it didn't matter as he had already vowed to rid

the world of Voldemort but he would like to be told these kinds of things. Who was Dumbledore to keep such an important thing from him?

Harry and Hermione hugged Dan and Emma promising to take care of each other and be careful. They quickly found a compartment and put their trunks inside. Not a few minutes later the Hogwarts Express slowly departed from the station where the parents waved at their children. One by one the parents left the station until it was devoid of people once more. Harry and Hermione were quickly joined by the four Weasley children and Harry and Hermione had to control themselves when they saw Scabbers sitting in Ron's lap. If Ron knew the truth about the rat he wouldn't be so concerned about its health. According to him his beloved pet had been sick for a few weeks now and even the woman at the Magical Menagerie didn't know what was wrong with him. It was then when Hermione's new familiar introduced himself.

Hermione had always wanted a cat but her parents had always refused until last week. Figuring she was old enough to handle the responsibility a pet represented they had gone to Diagon Alley where she had looked around for a few minutes until she noticed the orange cat that nobody else wanted. It was love at first sight according to what she had told Harry; the cat was larger than a regular housecat but a lot fatter as well. She affectively named him Crookshanks because she thought he was so cute with his crooked legs. It had taken Harry a few hours to get to know the animal but it seemed he was accepted and approved of by the cat.

"Oh I'm sorry Crookshanks; let me get you out of there." Hermione said hurriedly. Crookshanks didn't need to be told twice when his cage opened and he jumped straight down into Harry's lap. That was until he noticed the rodent sitting across of him; instincts took over and the cat lunged at Scabbers/Wormtail like any self-respecting cat would. It was only Harry's quick reflexes that saved the rat from being cat food.

"Crookshanks no; you don't know where that's been." Harry laughed loudly which made everyone except Ron join in the laughter. Hermione because she understood what Harry truly meant, Ginny

because her hero laughed and the twins laughed at seeing Ron's face.

"Bloody Hell, whose monster is that?" Ron blurred out. Harry stopped laughing and cringed at those words; he had seen what happened when someone insulted her new familiar. Sirius had experienced that first hand after she hexed him for laughing at Crookshanks.

"Ronald Weasley, I would appreciate it if you didn't insult Crookshanks." Hermione said in a calm voice but everyone could see just how mad she was. "Crookshanks is a very nice cat and you can't blame him for following his instincts."

"Can't blame him? He almost ate Scabbers." Ron fired back.

"Don't be silly Ronald; I wouldn't have let him eat Scabbers. Like Harry said he might get sick from it." Hermione said petting her cat.

Ron was about to yell some more when the door of the compartment opened and a man entered. The man looked about in his thirties and his clothes looked very well worn but he smiled at everyone before closing the door.

"Excuse me but would it be alright for me to sit here?" the man politely asked. "Everywhere else is full or they wouldn't allow me to sit down."

"Of course sir, there's plenty of room for all of us." Harry said immediately.

"Thank you; my name is Remus Lupin and I'm the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher." Remus introduced himself. At hearing the name Harry and Hermione shared a look of amazement and shock before they hid it with a smile. Talk about good fortune; the man they promised to look for just walked into their compartment and was going to be their teacher.

"It's nice to meet you Sir." Harry said before introducing everyone.

They soon discovered that Remus Lupin was a very intelligent man if not a little on the quiet side. Harry, Hermione and Remus were having a conversation about the spells they were going to learn during his classes but he wouldn't tell too much lest he ruined the surprise. He did say however that the first part would be focused on Magical Creatures that were classified as Dark Creatures. This started a conversation on how some creatures were treated making Remus a little uncomfortable but the kids pretended not to notice. The rest of the gang was amusing themselves by reading Teen Witch Weekly (Ginny), discussing a new prank (the twins) and sleeping (Ron).

About two hours after they had left King's Cross Station a certain blonde-haired Slytherin came to annoy them. Malfoy had seemed to get some of his confidence back over the holidays; Harry had mostly destroyed that after beating him during the duel in Lockhart's class. He wasn't alone however as he had his trusty followers known as Crabbe and Goyle alongside him. Malfoy peered into the compartment and smirked when he saw the occupants.

"Well if it isn't Potty, his mudblood and blood traitors." Malfoy sneered loudly. Hermione had to restrain Harry by grabbing his arm when Malfoy used the word mudblood to insult her. "And who are you?" Malfoy asked Remus.

"Oh I'm just a passenger catching a ride to Hogwarts." Remus smiled at the blonde.

"Aren't you a little too old to go to Hogwarts or you so stupid that you have to redo your time?" Malfoy laughed at his own remark.

"Not quite Mr. Malfoy. You see I'm the new DADA teacher for this year." Remus said and smiled when Malfoy seemed to lose all color in his face. "Rest assured that I will have a word with your Head of House about that particular word you used to insult Miss Granger."

Malfoy quickly turned and fled the scene his two bodyguards following a few seconds later. The whole compartment exploded in laughter when Remus turned to the students with a mischievous grin on his face. The twins were congratulating him on a prank well done while

Hermione thanked him for defending her. Remus just waved it off saying he hated that word and that it should never be used in a conversation or ever for that matter.

The rest of the trip had been going great until they were an hour from reaching Hogwarts. All of the sudden Crookshanks started hissing and Scabbers/Wormtail started shaking and crawled inside Ron's robes. The occupants of the compartment stopped whatever they were doing when they felt the Hogwarts Express came to a halt. Knowing that they hadn't reached Hogwarts yet they wondered what was going on. They noticed that it was getting very cold inside, so cold that the windows started to get frost and their breath was visible in the air. Remus immediately understood what was going on and ordered them not to move and to stay as quiet as possible.

The kids did what Remus said as he sounded very worried and a minute later the door of the compartment slowly opened. A wave of despair and unhappiness hit everyone; Harry and Hermione weren't affected as much as the other kids thanks to their Occlumency training but even they felt it. Remus was also affected but he seemed to be in control of his emotions. A dark creature became visible; it resembled a floating cloak that hid how the creature looked. Harry could only see the hand that opened the door and it was enough to tell him that he didn't want to know what it looked like. The creature advanced on them but Remus stood in between them.

"Sirius Black isn't on this train. Leave us alone." He exclaimed. It seemed to work as the creature turned to leave but all of the sudden it stopped and turned back to Harry. Remus recognizing the danger acted and yelled out "EXPECTO PATRONUM" and a white mist appeared. Whatever the mist was it seemed to scare the creature as it hastily retreated and left the compartment.

As soon as the creature had left everyone started feeling better and Remus helped them by giving them some chocolate. He said it would help them with the feeling of unhappiness and it did. After they had eaten the chocolate Ron ask what those things were.

“That was a Dementor. Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, and they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles feel their presence, though they can't see them. Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling; every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself...soul-less and evil. You will be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life.” Remus explained before he excused himself to check up on the rest of the students with the help of the prefects.

“Bloody hell; that was awful.” Ron said still shaking a bit from the experience.

“Imagine being trapped in Azkaban and having to be around those things all day long.” Harry said and for the first time he truly realized what Sirius must have been through during his time at Azkaban.

“No wonder they say you go crazy in there.” Ginny said.

The opening feast had been pretty much the same as the two before that; Dumbledore did his little speech warning them for the dangers of the Forbidden Forest but this time he also warned everyone about the Dementors. During the feast Harry and Hermione talked with several other members of Gryffindor one of them being Neville Longbottom; both of them had promised to get to know the shy boy. Sirius had told them that Neville was another candidate for the Prophecy and what had happened to his parents. They felt a bit ashamed of themselves that they already had been at Hogwarts for two years and they hadn't really gotten to know the boy. Sure they talked and went to classes together but that was it; this year they would make an effort. After all Neville was going to be a target for Voldemort and his Death Eaters because of the Prophecy. After the feast the students were told to go to their respective common room since classes started early the next day.

Remus Lupin was currently walking towards Dumbledore's office to give his version of what had happened on train. He was also thinking

about the young man that resembled his deceased friends so much. Harry looked so much like James it was unnerving but his eyes and mind definitely came from Lily, Remus thought. Harry was a bright young man with a good clear head on his shoulders and though he acted a bit more mature than a 13 year old boy should he seemed to be a happy and positive young man. He had no doubt a certain Miss Granger was one of the reasons for that; she was Harry's best friend after all. Hermione had impressed him as well; very intelligent yet modest and down to earth. She knew things even he didn't know and he was sure the two of them were going to be a joy to teach.

He gave the password to the Gargoyle that protected the entrance to Dumbledore's office and climbed the stairs. He chuckled when Dumbledore told him to come in before he even knocked. He still hadn't figured out how he did that; during their time at Hogwarts he and his friends had been here more than once after one of their pranks. Those were the happiest days of his life and he seriously doubted he would ever feel that happy ever again.

"Ah Remus welcome; I hope you found your quarters to your satisfaction?" Dumbledore said.

"Of course Sir, thank you so much." Remus thanked the man. He had been having trouble finding a job when Dumbledore asked him to teach DADA this year.

"Not at all, now all we have to do is wait for the rest of the staff to arrive." Dumbledore said offering a lemon drop to Remus who politely declined. The rest of the staff arrived a few minutes later and the meeting could begin.

"Thank you all for coming." Dumbledore said before starting. "Now, we have a lot to discuss so let's get started. First of all I would like to address the events on the train earlier this night. I have already warned Cornelius that if such a thing would happen again I would forcibly remove the Dementors from Hogwarts. I was against it in the first place but he wouldn't listen to me. Now Remus, you were there so please tell us what happened."

Remus nodded and told them what had happened. The rest of the staff (except Snape) were horrified that the Dementor seemed to take an interest in Harry and the wondered what this was about. Dumbledore didn't have an answer at the moment but he said that he would take a closer look as to why this might have happened. Remus finished his story by telling them how he checked on the students with the help of the Prefects.

"Actually there is one more thing I need to address," Remus said. "It's concerning Mr. Malfoy."

"Of course you would have a problem with Slytherin don't you Lupin." Snape sneered at him.

"On the contrary Severus, it has nothing to do with Slytherin but specifically with Mr. Malfoy himself," Remus said shaking his head. He knew that Snape wouldn't accept him as one of his colleagues seeing their past together.

"Please explain Remus," Prof. McGonagall asked.

"Mr. Malfoy came to the compartment where Harry, Hermione, the Weasleys and I were sitting. He insulted all of us but he used a particular term to insult Miss Granger," Remus explained. "I believe the term is 'Mudblood'?" All the other teachers gasped when they heard that word. It was one of the most despicable and foul names that existed in the Wizarding World and heavily frowned upon to use that word.

"Judging by her reaction it wasn't the first time she had been called that and that's what bothers me," Remus said loudly. "Miss Granger is one of the brightest witches I have ever seen and for her to be treated like that is unacceptable."

"I agree; the use of such language reflects poor on us and our society," Dumbledore agreed. "Severus, you'll inform Mr. Malfoy that he has a week's worth of detention with Prof. Lupin for the use of that foul word. You will also inform him that any further use of that word will result in more detentions and point reduction."

“Albus, you can’t be serious.” Severus protested.

“I’m perfectly serious Severus. Miss Granger is an asset to our world and she should be treated like one.” Dumbledore said sternly. “I will not condone such actions from anyone.”

Snape saw he wasn’t going to win this one and sat down glaring at Remus who ignored the man. The rest of the meeting was pretty boring as they discussed lesson plans and administrative tasks. An hour later Remus left the office eager to get some sleep. If he had known there was so much paperwork to being a teacher he would have declined the offer but on the other hand he could finally get to know Harry so that made everything alright.

The next day Harry and Hermione were sitting at the breakfast table when McGonagall gave them their timetables. They had taken the same classes after careful examination of the classes they could take. At first Hermione wanted to take all available classes but that was impossible since some classes were giving at the same time. With Harry’s and Hedwig’s help she asked several questions to McGonagall during the summer. She asked for a small synopsis of the classes she would like to take and McGonagall had send back some notes and recommendations.

When Hermione looked at the notes of the Muggle Studies course she was appealed at how many mistakes there were. Some of the things they taught the students were either horribly outdated or just completely wrong. Harry had helped her make the decision when he told her that the course was taught by a Pureblood Wizard. That explained a lot of things and she decided not to take to course. That left Divination and Care for Magical Creatures.

McGonagall had Divination pegged as a very wooly discipline and personally she wouldn’t advice taking the class. Harry had already decided not to take that class as he didn’t believe in that sort of things. He liked to believe that he was in control of his own life and while he didn’t completely discarded the practice of divination it just wasn’t something he would like to learn about. That closed the deal for Hermione as well and she dropped that class as well. According to

McGonagall they could take the OWL's if they wanted in the fifth year regardless if they took the classes.

Care for Magical Creatures was something they both liked and now that they knew it was Hagrid who would be teaching they were looking forward to it. They were a bit worried about what kind of creatures he would teach about but they had confidence that he would do well. The rest of their classes were Potions, Transfiguration, Charms, DADA, Herbology, Ancient Runes and Arithmancy. It was a heavy workload but Harry and Hermione had more than time enough thanks to the sleep-reducing ritual. Luckily the classes were evenly spread over the week so things would be alright.

"Bloody hell, is that our schedule?" Ron blurred out loudly when he peaked at the paper.

"Language Ron and yes it is." Hermione said glaring at him.

"Bollocks; seems heavy. How many classes are you guys taking?" Ron said ignoring the tone of Hermione's voice.

"Harry and I have 8 classes." She snapped at him.

"What electives have you chosen Ron?" Harry asked trying to defuse the situation.

"I chose Divination; Fred and George told me it's an easy class." Ron said smiling.

"You only took one?" Harry asked not knowing why he was surprised at hearing that seeing Ron was as lazy as they come.

"Yep; I figured that with the usual classes one extra class was more than enough." Ron nodded before turning back to his breakfast.

Harry and Hermione sighed; they knew Ron would never change his ways and on the inside they were happy that they would have a few classes without him. It wasn't that they disliked the boy as he could be quite funny and enjoyable at times but during classes he was always complaining and hardly paid attention. Of course that came

back and bit him in the ass when he had to do his homework. They finished breakfast and got ready for the first day.

Chapter 23: A Boggart and the Chamber revisited

While Harry and Hermione were off to Hogwarts, Sirius was at home in Harry's house. Already he felt better than he had in years thanks to some revitalizing Potions, a steady diet and some good old fashioned work-outs. He had put up a bit of weight no longer being skin over bones and the haunted look he had slowly vanished as well. He had been studying Occlumency and it helped him confront his past and deal with it. He closed all those memories of Azkaban off inside a shield so they wouldn't bother him again; of course it still happened that he had a little breakdown but nothing like he feared he would have.

For the first time in years he had purpose in life (except surviving) and he fully concentrated on his task. Harry had asked him to write everything he knew about Voldemort and his Death Eaters down. He paid special attention to names, tactics, how they worked and fought so they could use this information later on. He also put down how the Order handled the war and where he agreed or disagreed. This took a lot of time but he didn't mind. He did wish he had someone to talk to outside of Dobby but that couldn't be helped at this time.

His godson had sent a letter (by Dobby-Express) that put a smile on his face. His friend Remus was currently at Hogwarts teaching the DADA class. He thought this was hilarious because in their days they were the menace of the school, the worst nightmare a teacher could have and now Remus was a teacher himself. He hoped the Weasley twins would do what they do best and annoy the hell out of him. Harry and Hermione had told him about the twins and their pranking abilities and Sirius definitely wanted to meet them some day. He had hoped that Harry and Hermione would approach Remus soon but they told him that that wasn't a smart thing to do. While Remus might be friendly and a great teacher it would be unwise to just go up to him and say that they knew where Sirius was and that he was innocent. Remus wouldn't believe them and he would make sure the authorities would be alerted.

They would have to win his trust first and that took a little more time than a few days. Sirius knew they were right and agreed that they

should take it slowly. The other news was that Wormtail was at Hogwarts and while he was shaking in fear he didn't have a clue his cover had been blown. Unfortunately Ron didn't let Scabbers out of his sight as he was so worried about his pet. So far they hadn't come up with a plan to catch him but they promised they would let him know as soon as they did. Sirius was looking forward to the day he got his hands on that rat; he would enjoy having a few 'words' with the traitor.

At Hogwarts the students were slowly getting used to having classes again and having to do homework. The first week had passed and our two heroes were very satisfied with the classes they had chosen. All of the classes were equally interesting and they were very happy that they had dropped Divination as most of the students complained about the lesson. Arithmancy had become Hermione's new favorite lessons while DADA was Harry's. As today was Saturday Harry and Hermione were searching for one particular student; they had been told he was doing some extra work for Prof. Sprout so they set out for the greenhouses.

Neville Longbottom was currently in a very good mood. So far classes had been great except Potion but he just couldn't help but screw up when Snape hovered around him like that. He had even been allowed to work on an extra project with his favorite teacher Prof. Sprout. Herbology was his favorite subject and about the only subject he was good at; he loved the feeling of taking care of the plants and cultivating them. It was very relaxing and rewarding in his opinion. He didn't have many friends at Hogwarts as a lot of people made fun of him for liking Herbology so much or that he was so shy and quiet. It didn't matter to him, one day they would see just how great a wizard he truly was. All he had to do was be himself and things would work out or at least that was what he had been told by Prof. Sprout.

"Hello Neville." Harry said scaring Neville as he hadn't heard them coming in.

"O-oh hello Harry, Hermione." Neville said with a shy smile. "What are you two doing here?" Neville admired the two of them; they were smart, popular and good at magic and they didn't tease him at all.

“Well we came to find you.” Hermione said smiling.

“Me?” Neville asked surprised. “Why?”

“To give you this.” Harry said holding out a package wrapped in a colorful paper.

“For me?” Neville asked accepting the package before tearing off the paper. Underneath was a book called ‘All you need to know about Herbology’. Neville looked at the duo not understanding what was happening.

“Happy belated Birthday Neville.” They both smiled.

“T-thank you; I don’t know what to say.” Neville stammered. “Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome Neville. Do you like it?” Harry said to the boy.

“It’s great thank you.”Neville smiled. “But how did you know when my birthday was?”

“It’s one day before mine so that’s how I knew.” Harry told him.

The trio went to sit down a bit further on one of the benches and talked a bit. Neville told him about his hobby (his own greenhouse) and how he lived with his Gran at Longbottom Manor. He told them how surprised they were when they found out his wasn’t a Squib and how happy he was when he got his Hogwarts letter. Harry and Hermione told him how surprised they had been when they got their letter. They also asked him why he was spending his Saturday working on this project instead of having fun with his friends.

“Ah well, you see I don’t have many friends.” Neville admitted. “I guess they think I’m just not worth having as a friend.”

“That’s utterly ridiculous Neville.” Harry quickly said. “You’re a great guy and a great wizard.” To which Hermione loudly agreed.

“But I’m rubbish at Potions and it takes me much longer than everyone else to do Charms and Transfiguration.” Neville said not really believing them. “I’m just not good at Magic.”

“Look Neville, don’t listen to them okay? I bet you’re ten times better than them. Tell you what; why don’t you join us for studying?” Hermione said. “That way if you have a question you can ask us and we’ll help you.”

“You wouldn’t mind being around me?” Neville asked amazed.

“Of course not; like I said you’re a great guy and I would be honored if you would be my friend.” Harry said sticking out his hand.

“Likewise.” Hermione added.

“I would like that very much.” Neville said smiling before shaking Harry’s hand.

The duo and their new friend spend the weekend together getting to know each other a little better. They got also made a studying schedule for during the week where they would spend one to two hours each day to go over what they had seen that day and to do any homework they might have. Harry and Hermione assured Neville that he could ask any questions he might have during that time. Neville went to sleep that night feeling very happy that he had made some real friends at Hogwarts.

With the escape of Sirius the whole Wizarding world had been on their guard and so were the teachers at Hogwarts. The students had been advised not to be outside once it got dark so they wouldn’t be attacked by the Dementors that still roamed around in search for Sirius. The teachers paid special attention to Harry and this made things a bit tricky when they tried to sneak around. Hermione said that they would have to postpone visiting the Chamber for a bit till things had calmed down enough. She figured that in a few weeks the shock of Sirius’ escape would have worn off so until that time they would have to lay low. Harry didn’t like it but he knew she was right. So they worked only on their Occlumency and their Animagus forms at night or in the early morning before going to breakfast.

The workload they had from their classes wasn't all that big and if they didn't put things off until the last minute they had more than time enough to have fun or spend time with the other students. Neville had become a permanent member of their group and with their help he had made some excellent progress. The teachers were very impressed with him and he had even managed to earn several points during Charms and Transfiguration. He and Harry had collaborated on a present for Hermione's fourteenth birthday; they had bought two books that were a series. The book was dedicated to her new favorite subject of Arithmancy. The book was a bit too advanced for a first year student of Arithmancy but they figured she would like it anyway which she did. Harry had also asked Dobby to bake a small birthday cake for the two of them that they could share later on. Unknown to Neville, Harry had a special present for his best friend.

"Happy Birthday 'Mione." Harry said giving her a small box.

"Harry, what's this? You already gave me a present." Hermione asked surprised.

"That was from Neville as well. This one is from me." Harry shrugged. Hermione carefully removed the paper and slowly opened the little box. She gasped when she saw the contents of it. Inside was a beautiful necklace made out of silver. It was a circle with inside the words 'You and Me' while on the circle itself the words 'Best Friends' were carved. On the back their names were written as well. Hermione was stunned; this was the best present she could ever wish for.

She jumped up and grabbed Harry in a hug thanking him for the great present. Before she let him go she gave him a kiss on the cheek which made him blush like crazy. Seeing Harry as red as a tomato she giggled a bit before asking him to put it on. With shaking hands he took it for her and gently placed it around her neck before closing it.

"It's charmed to be unbreakable and only you can take it off." Harry said still blushing a bit.

“Thank you Harry, I love it.” Hermione said smiling while holding the necklace between her fingers.

“You’re welcome ‘Mione.” Harry said softly. Both of them went to bed with a huge smile on their face.

It was now almost halfway through October and the fuss around Sirius’ escape had calmed down again. Almost two months had passed after his escape and nobody had seen or heard from him so most people thought he had either died during his escape or he had left Britain altogether. The only things that were still there were the Dementors; Fudge refused to call them off as he wouldn’t take any risks as long as he didn’t see the body of Sirius Black in person. His career had been saved by his quick actions and he had gotten somewhat popular again when the people saw that he would act to protect them. Not looking a gift horse in the mouth Fudge continued this so he could remain as Minister of Magic a bit longer.

At Hogwarts everything had calmed down; the teachers let up on the special attention they gave to Harry. This was something Harry was very glad for; he hated being treated differently. More than once he had noticed how teachers seemed to follow him or keep an eye on him from afar. Now however things were back to normal and Harry and Hermione could resume their plans. This weekend they would visit the Chamber and start exploring it while coming up with a plan to use it. Today however they had DADA with Remus and they would be studying a Magical Creature called a Boggart.

The students were looking forward to this class; Prof. Lupin was one of the most loved teachers at Hogwarts. He was funny, he always smiled and his lessons were filled with interesting subjects. So far they had covered several Dark Magical Creatures and he always had a story or anecdote to tell about them. It was easily one of the best classes they had.

“Alright class, who can tell me what a Boggart is?” Remus asked his students. Harry and Hermione raised their hands but he picked Neville instead.

"I-it's a creature that lives in dark places and it's capable of taking the form of a person's worst nightmare." Neville said knowing the answer as he had studied it the day before.

"Very good Neville, 10 points to Gryffindor." Remus smiled. "Who can tell me what a Boggart really looks like?" Several hands went up and he picked someone from Ravenclaw.

"Nobody really knows as they are shape shifters." The boy said.

"Correct, take 10 points as well." Remus smiled. "Alright the spell to dispose of a Boggart is called 'Riddikulus' and you have to visualize your worst fear in an amusing way. When you laugh it will scare the Boggart away. Now, in the closet is a Boggart; one by one you'll come forward and face it. Remember the spell and laughing is the only way to defeat it. Now who wants to go first?"

Of course nobody like to go first, well maybe expect Hermione but even she wasn't too sure about seeing her worst fear, so nobody stepped up. That was until Neville put up his hand and went to stand in front of the closet. Immediately people started talking about shy, quiet Neville being the one who volunteered and Harry was very proud of his friend. For a few weeks now they had been telling him that he needed to show confidence in his abilities and that Magic would do the rest.

When Remus asked him what feared Neville the most he replied that it was Prof. Snape. Remus nodded knowingly; Severus would always talk about Neville and the disasters his potions were. He then whispered something in Neville's ear making him smile. He nodded and showed he was ready. Remus opened the door and stepped back. Nothing happened at first but a few seconds later a perfect replica of Snape stepped out of the closet looking very irritated and angry.

Neville concentrated for a second and pointed his wand at Snape before shouting 'Riddikulus'. The effect was instantaneous and the clothes Snape was wearing changed into a bright pink tutu with the customary ballet shoes. The class exploded in laughter when they

saw their usually strict Potion master wearing a ballet outfit and the Boggart fled back into the closet.

“Well done Neville, well done indeed.” Remus chuckled loudly. He wouldn’t be able to look Severus in the eyes at dinner that night he was sure of that. “Line up and we’ll take turns between Gryffindors and Ravenclaws.”

One by one the students faced the Boggart and the laughter could be heard throughout Hogwarts. Harry and Hermione were standing at the end of the line waiting for their turn. Harry was kind of curious what his worst fear would be but he figured it could be anything. Hermione however wasn’t looking forward to her turn at all; she didn’t need a Boggart to know what her worst fear was. She had several but as of late her worst fear was Harry telling that he didn’t return her feelings. She would prefer that Harry didn’t learn of her feeling for him just yet. Luckily time was up before her or Harry’s turn came up and she quickly gathered her stuff and waited for Harry outside.

“Hermione, are you okay?” Harry asked concerned.

“I’m fine Harry; it’s just that I didn’t want to face that Boggart.” She said softly.

“Well, if you want to talk about you know where to find me right?” Harry said understanding.

“Thank you Harry that’s very sweet of you.” She said giving his arm a gentle squeeze.

That evening Severus Snape was in a very foul mood. All day long no matter where he went people started snickering and laughing when they saw him. He had already given several detentions and took almost a hundred points from each house except Slytherin but everyone refused to tell him why they were laughing. It was driving him nuts. He had checked for any pranks on his person but he came out clean. This wouldn’t have been the first time someone charmed his clothes or something like that.

This continued till dinner where he noticed that even his fellow teachers had trouble holding their laughs. Finally he couldn't take it anymore and he demanded an explanation. Remus sighed knowing he would get all the blame for this and told him what had happened in the DADA class. Of course he didn't tell the name of the student so poor Neville wouldn't get in trouble. He said that the students present during that class must have told other and so it had spread around the castle. Snape didn't see the humor in it and stormed out of the Great Hall shouting that if found the person who did this he would pay.

"You know, it wasn't all that funny." Remus said loudly. "I mean, seeing a grown man in a girls' tutu isn't exactly something that I like to see. Especially when that man is Severus." This made most of the students in the Great Hall laugh even some Slytherins dared to let out a small chuckle.

It had taken the rest of the week before people stopped snickering behind Snape's back. That and detentions.

Quietly Harry sneaked out of his dorm though he didn't have to worry about waking some. If they could sleep through Ron's snoring than they wouldn't wake up from Harry leaving the room. Tonight they would go visit the Chamber of Secret again and they had gone to bed extra early to get their four hours of sleep. Now it was about midnight and only he and Hermione were awake. He greeted her and together they went over his backpack. Harry had packed some stuff they might need like vials and knives which they would need later on when they cut up the basilisk for potion ingredients. Seeing he had everything he called Dobby to 'pop' them to the Chamber and a few seconds later they stood in front of Slytherin's statue.

"Thank you Dobby." Harry said.

"Dobby is happy to help Harry Potter Sir." Dobby said before leaving again.

"Well, what do you think?" Harry said.

"I think we need some light so we can look around." The chamber was pretty dark so they ignited the torches that lined the walls around the Chamber.

"Much better." Harry agreed.

"Alright I'll start with collecting the Basilisk's parts while you explore the rest of the room." Hermione said taking his backpack.

The basilisk's parts were actually very rare potion ingredients; if you had to buy them they would cost a fortune but they were lucky enough to have one of the largest basilisks ever recorded at their disposal. For example the venom of the Basilisk went up to 50 galleons for a vial or the fangs went up to a thousand galleons. They had big plans for most of the parts so they needed to harvest as much as possible. Luckily for them the basilisk hadn't decayed too much so most of it was salvageable.

Another part was its skin that was highly magic resistant. Out of all the Magical Creatures that were Magic-resistant the basilisk came only second to dragons. The skin could be used to make protective clothing and that's exactly what they planned on doing. They had enough skin to make dozens of outfits as the basilisk had been over 50 feet long so as long as they didn't waste any they were fine. Hermione wasted no time and first drained the venom and stored it in specially made vials. Next she removed all the fangs and shrunk them to fit in a box. Once she was done with that she harvested a few dozen vials of blood that they might be useful in a few rituals. Then using a shaving charm she stripped the skin and cleaned it before putting it on the side. She couldn't shrink it since it was so highly resistant to magic. The last part of her job was collecting the vital organs and storing them as well.

Harry had been walking around the Chamber and he was surprised how big it actually was. If he had to guess the chamber measured a good 150 feet in length and 100 feet in width. The chamber's ceiling was supported by 10 stone pillars but one of them was broken (the one Hermione had stood on to distract the Basilisk) but he figured they could repair it with Dobby's help. Harry already had several ideas in mind for all this free space the Chamber had. He now stood

in front of the statue of Salazar Slytherin and frowned; it wasn't that it was ugly (okay it was ugly) but it took a lot of space so maybe he could transfigure it into something more suiting. He would have to talk to Hermione about this.

"Harry, I'm done how about you?" Hermione yelled out.

"I'll be right there." Harry said hurrying over to where Hermione was sitting. "So how did it go?"

"I collected everything worth saving and stored it into vials or boxes." Hermione proudly said. "The skin is over there." She said pointing.

"Wow, great job 'Mione." Harry said impressed.

"What have you found?" Hermione asked him.

"Nothing much; the chamber is about 150 by 100 feet and one stone pillar is broken." Harry shrugged. "And I'm thinking of removing that statue of Salazar."

"What would you put instead?" she asked.

"No idea yet but I'm sure we'll come up with something." He grinned.

They decided that they had done enough that night and Harry called Dobby and asked if he could bring everything they recovered to 'The Room' and then come get them. Dobby nodded and 10 seconds later they were back in the Gryffindor Common room. It had taken them a few hours but they hadn't been noticed so they were happy with their success. Starting tomorrow they could begin with transforming the Chamber into their secret hideout. It would take a lot of work and resources but they deemed it important enough so they didn't mind the work.

Yes, already at the end of the chapter. I hope you enjoyed it and let me know how it was. The next chapter will be out in two weeks like usual. So see you all then.

Chapter 24: Not the Dementors again?

It was a rainy afternoon when the Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Hufflepuff; Harry, Hermione, Neville and the rest of their house were supporting their team by shouting encouragement. The match was very close and both teams were still capable of winning. Harry however wasn't really paying attention to the match; no he was thinking about the stuff they had been doing over the past two weeks.

They had started with drawing plans for the construction of their hideout at the Chamber of Secrets. There had been some discussion between Harry and Hermione but in the end they had finished the plans. First of all they would have to create rooms; they planned on have 6 to 8 rooms each with its own purpose. There would be a room with beds to sleep in, a potion room to brew potions in, a medical room with beds in case they were sick or wounded, a conference room to have meetings, a weapons/changing room and then they still had three rooms to spare. The really cool thing about the rooms was that they could magically be expanded into much bigger rooms just like one of the magical tents or trunks Harry had seen at Diagon Alley.

The rest of the Chamber would be used as a practice area and what not. To make the rooms however they needed materials like stone which Sirius would order at a Muggle company by using Harry's instructions. When those materials had arrived Dobby would 'pop' them over and start building the rooms. He had told Harry that he was quite capable of doing that and it would be much faster than if Harry and Hermione did it. Of course they didn't refuse Dobby's help.

The parts that Hermione had been harvested from the Basilisk had been safely stored and now they were looking for potions or rituals that needed those ingredients. They had found a few of them but so far those potions or rituals had been way too Dark for them to use. There had been a ritual that gave a power boost if you used a Basilisk's heart but you also needed to sacrifice 7 girls and they all had to be virgins. Needless to say they had skipped that particular ritual.

Last week Remus Lupin had finally told Harry that he knew his parents and now Harry could start building his relationship with the man. So he asked if he would mind telling him about his parents and Remus agreed after some thinking. So they had decided to meet once or twice every week to talk and have tea. Harry and Hermione had loved those little meetings as Remus told the craziest stories. They planned to wait for several weeks and then they would try to figure out how he felt about Sirius and maybe tell him what had happened over the summer. They would have to be careful not to scare the man but they had a good feeling about it.

Harry's thoughts were interrupted when a sudden cold descended up the stadium. All around the station people started shivering like never before and the youngest started collapsing or crying. The Quidditch players stopped their game when several Dementors passed by them headed to the stands below them. Harry looked up and saw about ten Dementors heading straight for him.

"Ah crap." Was the only reply that left his mouth.

On the teacher's stand Dumbledore moved with speed that would belie his age and faster than light he had his wand in his right hand and held it out in front of him. With a voice booming over the station he cast the Patronus charm and a magnificent white phoenix appeared. The phoenix went straight to the Dementors who shrieked loudly before retreating. With the Dementors gone the Patronus disappeared into thin air. Dumbledore was furious and he would have a serious word with Cornelius but right now his students needed his help. He ordered his teachers to help the youngest while calling a house elf and asked it to bring enough chocolate for every student in the stadium.

In the air above the stadium Fawkes appeared and started singing his song; it had an immediate effect and it calmed the students especially the youngest who had never seen a phoenix before. The Phoenix' song was a song of happiness and relaxation so it was very efficient against the effect of Dementors. Harry helped Hermione up as she had fallen during the chaos but she was unhurt. The rest of the students who were sitting in the vicinity of Harry were the most

effected however and Harry wished he could do something to help them.

“Harry, are you alright?” Dumbledore said worriedly.

“I’m fine sir. Your Patronus saved me and the other students.” Harry nodded.

“Don’t worry about your friends Harry; they’ll be fine once they eat some chocolate.” Dumbledore said after examining him.

“Thank you Sir; do you know why the Dementors are so interested in me? Harry asked wanting to know why those blasted Creatures had singled him out two times already.

“I’m not sure Harry but if I had to take a guess I would say that it’s because of your history with Voldemort.” Dumbledore said quietly. “We’ll talk later but right now I need those of you who are able to help give the students chocolate.”

Harry nodded and both Hermione and Neville joined him to help. The Quidditch teams helped as well as they weren’t affected at all since the Dementors had passed them without giving them a second look. An hour later almost every student felt much better. The teachers then ordered them to go to the castle where they would be giving some hot chocolate. Once all his students were safe and sound Dumbledore excused himself and went straight to his office. He had a Floo-call to make.

Whatever Fudge gained in popularity by trying to catch Sirius Black faded away like snow on a hot summer day when the parents were notified that Dementors had attacked the students at Hogwarts. It had been a very close call but Fudge had managed to keep his position as Minister. If this would have happened without the escape of Sirius Black he would be out flat on his ass the morning after the attack. Unfortunately the people were willing to give him another chance. The day after the attack all the Dementors were ordered back to Azkaban and were to stay there until further notice. Dumbledore had been most clear that if they weren’t gone by the end of the day he would call for Fudge’s resignation.

At Hogwarts the students were given the day off so they could recover from the attack. Harry and Hermione had talked to Remus and he had agreed to teach them the Patronus Charm. At first he refused since the Dementors were gone but they insisted and in the end he agreed. They would meet in the weekend and practice together though he did tell them that the Patronus Charm was high-level magic and it might be impossible for them to learn it seeing they were both quite young. Still that didn't discourage the two and they assured him that they would be alright.

After talking to Remus they strolled around Hogwarts just relaxing and Neville joined them as well when they saw him reading in the library. They walked talking about what had happened and how awesome Dumbledore's Patronus was. Harry and Hermione had already seen Fawkes but Neville hadn't and he was very impressed with the bird. Fun times were over however when Malfoy and his two bodyguards stopped them by blocking the way.

"Well, look what we have here?" Malfoy grinned.

"Just let us through Malfoy." Harry sighed; he wasn't in the mood to listen to the blonde's taunts.

"Look boys it's Dementor-lure Potter." Malfoy laughed. "Bet you were shaking in your boots when they came after you."

"Shut up Malfoy." Harry said trying to stay calm.

"Maybe you should have let them kiss you Potter." Malfoy said. "That way you won't have to suffer when the Dark Lord comes back."

"You mean Voldemort?" Harry deadpanned smiling at how Malfoy cringed at hearing that name.

"Don't you dare speak His name, Potter." Malfoy said trying to look brave. "When he gets back he'll take care of you and your Mudblood. Then I'll...."

Malfoy didn't finish his sentence as he felt his nose break under Harry's fist. He stumbled back against Goyle before dropping like a sack of bricks. Malfoy's bodyguards were ready to act when McGonagall appeared asking what was going on. She looked at the downed Slytherin before ordering the two other to carry him to the Hospital Wing.

"You tell him that if he ever uses that word again a broken nose will be the least of his problems." Harry yelled after them.

"Mr. Potter, what is going on here? I must say I'm very disappointed in your actions here." McGonagall said glaring at him.

"Professor, it wasn't Harry fault." Hermione tried to say.

"Miss Granger, you will tell me this instant what happened here." Minerva demanded.

"Well, we were just walking when Malfoy and his goons stopped us and started making fun of Harry. They told him he was a lure for the Dementors and that he should have let them kiss him. That way he wouldn't suffer when Voldemort came back." Hermione quickly explained.

"I see but that still doesn't explain why Mr. Potter saw it fit to break young Malfoy's nose." She said.

"It was because Malfoy insulted 'Mione with that foul word again." Harry said for the side. "Last time he called her that was on the train but Prof. Lupin took care of that."

"What word?" She asked although she had a good idea what it was.

"Do not ask me to say that word Professor. I'll never say it nor accept it when someone calls her that." Harry said refusing.

"I see; Mr. Potter I'll never condone the use of violence no matter what the reason might be so you'll be spending two weeks in detention with me or Prof. Lupin." McGonagall said. "Rest assured

that I will have a word with Mr. Malfoy and he will be punished for insulting Miss Granger. Come see me tonight at 7 in my office.”

“Yes Professor.” Harry said nodding and watched as she left.

“Are you okay Harry?” Hermione asked concerned. “What were you thinking?”

“I’m fine ‘Mione.” Harry said. “And to answer your second question, I wanted to show him what happens when he insults my best friend.”

“But now you have two weeks of detention.” Hermione sighed.

“Who cares about detentions anyway? It was worth it to see Malfoy drop.” Harry flashed a grin.

“This isn’t funny Harry.” Hermione said seriously. “You should be happy they don’t expel you.”

“Hermione, I don’t think they’ll ever expel Harry from Hogwarts.” Neville smiled.

“See? Besides he needed to be taught a lesson anyway and I’ll do it again if I have to.” Harry said.

Harry had spent his two weeks of detention without any problems. The first week he had his detention with McGonagall where he had to help her grade homework from the First and Second years. Harry didn’t mind one bit since they talked about his parents while they were working and Harry came to the conclusion that she only punished him because she was obligated. When he asked her she didn’t confirm nor deny this. The second week he had his detention with Remus and that wasn’t detention at all; at first Remus had been shocked that Harry would do such a thing but when he heard what Malfoy had done he agreed completely saying he would have done exactly the same thing. During their time together they practiced the Patronus Charm and talked about the pranks his father had done during his time at Hogwarts.

Malfoy left the hospital Wing the day after Harry had punched him and he too had been given detention and a severe point reduction issued by Dumbledore himself. This made him think twice about insulting Hermione. His nose still hurt and Snape had been very mad at him for losing so many points and for losing to Potter. He was forced to clean out filthy cauldrons without magic and he had felt like he was a bloody house elf.

Hermione had been a bit angry at Harry; not because he had defended her but because he acted like nothing happened. She wanted him to realize that he was lucky not to get expelled. But most of all she was afraid what she would do if he got expelled. What would happen to her if her best friend was gone. Once she had told him those fears he had hugged her while promising not to get into any more fights but he reserved the right to protect her if necessary. She had agreed and forgiven him for acting so rashly.

Now it was already November and they still hadn't found a way to get to Wormtail and they were beginning to get impatient. Sirius had been long done with his work and he was itching to get something to do. So Harry asked him if he was capable of brewing some complicated potions like Polyjuice Potion and Veritaserum; these potions were potions that needed a lot of supervising so they were just the thing to occupy him. Sirius had eagerly accepted and started brewing; he was also asked to brew a special potion that would be needed in a ritual.

The renovation of the Chamber of Secrets had been going great; Dobby had outdone himself and already had five rooms finished and was halfway through with the sixth room. The rooms were nothing more than a few wall placed together for now but soon they would be able to start on the decorating the rooms. Sirius had already ordered a dozen cheap beds that they could use for the bedroom and the medical room. Another thing he had ordered was 10 lockers that were used in gyms so they could place them in the Weapon/Changing Room.

Harry and Hermione were once again meeting in the common room so they could 'pop' to the Chamber to work on their plans. They were about to call for Dobby when two figures jumped from behind the couch on the other end of the room. When they had gotten over their

scare Harry and Hermione saw that it was none other than the Weasley twins.

“Are you two trying to give us a heart attack?” Hermione hissed at them.

“What’s a heart attack?” the twins asked.

“Never mind what are you to doing here?” Harry wanted to know.

“Now ickly Harrikins , we could ask you the same question.” They fired back. “But we already know something is going on.”

“What are you two talking about?” Hermione said trying to sound innocent.

“We’ve been monitoring you for a few weeks now.” They admitted. “And each night the two of you leave the common room around 2 AM and don’t come back until about 6 AM.”

“Euhm....” Harry said trying to find an excuse.

“Whatever you two are doing, we want in.” The twins said grinning.

“Huh?” Hermione said stupidly.

“Yeah, you two are up to mischief and we want to join.” The twins smiled.

“Okay, let’s not talk here in case we’re overheard.” Harry said before calling Dobby and asking him to ‘pop’ the four of them to the Chamber.

Fred and George were stunned that a house elf transported them to who knows where and they looked at Harry for an explanation. Harry asked Dobby if he could bring them something to drink while he started his explanations. Before he started however he needed to know how they had been found out and when he asked the twins they smirked and took out an old piece of parchment. Fred took out his

wand tapping the parchment and said “I solemnly swear I’m up to no good.”

To their surprise a map appeared on the parchment showing every corner of Hogwarts. It didn’t just show a complete map of Hogwarts it also showed dots with names representing people and where they were at the current time. Harry and Hermione were amazed at the map and wondered how the twins had managed to make such a thing.

“We didn’t make it. We stole it from Filch’s office in our first year.” The twin said in joined speak. “It was made by the Marauders.”

“Really? My dad helped make this?” Harry blurred out.

“We are not worthy.” The twins said kneeling in front of Harry. “Your father was part of our heroes? They were the pranking gods during their time at Hogwarts. The teachers still fear their name.”

“Get up you idiots.” Harry laughed. Suddenly he saw a name on the map just besides Ron’s nametag. It read ‘Peter Pettigrew’. Harry quickly grabbed Hermione and showed her; this was a way they could show Remus that the traitor was still alive and since he had helped build the map he knew how it worked. They would think about this later though as the twins were looking at them like they were going crazy.

“Alright, thanks for showing us guys.” Hermione said. “Now before we tell you anything we need to know if we can trust you guys. Contrary to what you guys think this is not a prank. This is a dead serious situation.”

“Hermione’s right; this isn’t a laughing matter.” Harry joined her.

“We understand; you can trust us Harry. You two saved Ginny’s life and we’ll never be able to thank you two enough for that.” They said serious for once. They even took a Magical Oath not to tell anyone of their secrets unless they were given permission by Harry and Hermione.

Harry nodded very impressed with the twins and started explaining what he and Hermione were trying to do. They told them about the rituals they had done, about the spells they learned, how they defeated Quirrel and all the rest they had been up to. Since the twins had discovered them they might as well try to recruit them Harry thought. He explained what their plans for the Chamber were and how they had Sirius on their side. Explaining the truth about Sirius had taken a few minutes but in the end they believed him.

“So let us get this straight.” The twins said. “The two of you are building a secret organization that’s going to fight You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters. And the two of you have been training for this since first year and have done several rituals to get stronger and get some advantages. You’re also building your own secret hideout in what once was the Chamber of Secrets build by Salazar Slytherin. Anything else?”

“Oh we’re also training to become an animagus.” Harry said noticing he had forgotten to tell them that.

“Oh this is the best thing ever. It’s like one big prank on You-Know-Who. He’ll be expecting a weak little Harry Potter but he’ll be getting a super-powered Mage with his own army ready to destroy him.” The twins said crackling with joy and laughter. “WE’RE IN!”

“Are you sure because this won’t be fun and games you know?” Hermione said smiling. “We’re going to fight against the strongest Dark Lord ever lived and his army.”

“Hermione, V-Voldemort tried to use our little sister so he could get back.” The twins said seriously. “That’s more than enough reason to wanting to kick his ass. Not to mention that when he returns our world will be at war once again. What better way to be safe than to learn how to fight and take out Death Eaters?”

“Very well, welcome to the club.” Harry said smiling. “The first thing you need to learn is Occlumency. It’s a skill that allows you to protect your mind so people can’t read it and found out your secrets.”

“Oh we know what it is.” They said. “Snape always tries to read our minds after one of our pranks. We learned that quickly after he caught us every time in the beginning. We’ve learned to keep him out years ago.”

“Really? Snape’s a Legilimens? That’s good to know.” Harry asked surprised.

“Do you mind if I performed Legilimency to see your shields? Hermione asked. “I promise not to read your mind.”

The twins agreed without problem and Hermione performed the spell. She was far from being a powerful Legilimens but she could at least see what their shields looked like and if they were strong. She broke the spell a minute later saying that she wouldn’t be able to break through them without them noticing. This satisfied Harry but he still asked them to read his notes and to upgrade their shields. The twins then asked if they would be able to perform the same rituals Harry and Hermione did.

“You guys don’t think rituals are Dark Magic?” Hermione asked once again surprised at the twins.

“We agree that some rituals are Dark and should never be performed but the ones you two did sound interesting and could save our lives later on.” They shrugged.

The four of them agreed to meet again the next night as it was already early in the morning. They would meet in the common room at 2 AM so they could come to the Chamber together. Then Harry would give them the instruction for the first two rituals they would perform being the sleep-reducing ritual and the bone-strengthening ritual. When the twins left to take a shower Harry and Hermione discussed what had happened. In the short time of a few months they had gained three allies and a possible fourth in Remus. They realized they had been very lucky that the twins were trustworthy because otherwise they would have been in deep trouble. But seeing that this wasn’t the case Harry was feeling very optimistic and understood that they had made two powerful new additions to their ranks. Things were looking great so far.

Thanks for reading and i hope you all enjoyed the chapter. I'm sure people will have some comments on this chapter so let me know if you have any concerns or questions. If not, then I wish you all a happy two weeks and see you next chapter. Bye for now.

Chapter 25: Animagus form and a Patronus

The twins proved to be very powerful allies; they had tons of ideas and were very good at inventing stuff. Though most of the stuff they came up with was prank related Harry and Hermione could see the use in some of them. The twins had told them how they dreamed to open a joke shop once they finished Hogwarts so now was the time to invent their future jokes. The twins also had an excellent knowledge of Hogwarts and knew several secret pathways in and out of Hogwarts. Harry particularly liked the one that let you go to Hogsmeade unnoticed. Hogsmeade was a small Wizarding Town a few miles from Hogwarts. The town had a few shops like Honeydukes (a candy store), The Three Broomsticks (a tavern) and Zonko's (a joke shop) to name a few. Starting with Third year students and up the students were allowed to go to Hogsmeade if they had permission from their parents.

Times passed quickly and before any of them realized it was already December and the Christmas Holidays were right around the corner. McGonagall had asked everyone in Gryffindor if they stayed at Hogwarts or if they went home to be with their family. Hermione would be spending Christmas at Hogwarts once more as her parents were asked to spend the holidays abroad by one of their business partners. She was a bit sad at first but she understood that this was how things worked in the real world; you can't always get what you want. Harry would stay too as he didn't want to be around the Dursleys any more than necessary. The Weasleys all went home as Mrs. Weasley wanted to have a family Christmas especially after what had happened with Ginny last year.

Harry had been contacted by Sirius saying that he finished brewing the Polyjuice Potion and was now making a second batch of it as well. Harry thanked and asked Dobby to bring him a vial of the potion. He and Hermione had finally come up with a way to capture Pettigrew and they would do it soon. They didn't tell Sirius in case it didn't work but they were fairly confident they would succeed. Once they got Pettigrew they would be able to prove Sirius' innocence to Remus and then they could tell him everything.

It was the week before the holidays started and it was now or never if they wanted to grab the dirty little rat. So one night Hermione was hidden under the invisibility cloak inside Harry's dorm waiting for the boys to fall asleep. She helped them a little bit by casting a sleeping spell in the room; she made great care to give both Ron and Scabbers an extra dose. Harry got up and walked over to Ron's bed; the rat was sleeping soundly unaware his life had just taken a turn for the worse. With a strong "Stupefy" Harry stunned the rat and quickly place him into a cage. The cage was charmed to be unbreakable and only had a few holes in it for air supply.

Hermione then took out a dead rat that was the perfect replica of Scabbers and place it next to Ron. Harry had come up with the idea a few days again when he heard the batch of Polyjuice Potion was ready. He had gathered some fur from Scabbers (who had been losing it for months due to stress caused by Sirius' escape) and used it in the potion. He then asked Dobby to catch a rat and they force-fed the potion to it. The rat transformed into Scabbers and Dobby had killed it with a spell locking it in Scabbers form. Hermione had been against it at first since she didn't want to kill a living creature but Dobby had assured her that it wouldn't feel a thing. Leaving the dorm they went downstairs where they met up with the twins and Dobby 'popped' them to the Chamber.

"Did you get him?" The twins asked?

"It went perfectly." Hermione smiled while Harry showed the transparent cage holding Wormtail.

"Excellent." The twins said together.

"Alright let's get him somewhere safe shall we?" Hermione said. They had created a place that could be used as prison cells. The room had 4 cells and was build like Muggle interrogation rooms meaning that there was one wall that was transparent if you stood on the outside but seemed a normal wall from the inside. The room was solid and had no door as they used a special spell that made the door appear and disappear when Harry and Co wanted. They had also place anti-apparation wards so their prisoners couldn't escape. They tossed

Wormtail on the small uncomfortable bed and they asked Dobby to hold him after they enervated him.

Peter Pettigrew aka Wormtail aka Scabbers woke up in an unknown location so he was slightly disoriented. Still in his animagus form he suddenly noticed four people and a house elf standing over him. He panicked and tried to run but before he could move an inch he felt his body stiffen and unable to move. The house elf beamed when Harry thanked him for restraining the rat. Harry then turned to the rat in front of him.

"Hello Peter." He greeted. "I'll bet you're wondering what is going on and where you are?"

"First of all let's get you back in human form." Hermione said before nodding to Dobby who flicked his fingers and the rat started to change. A few seconds later a fat little man sat in front of them with a horror struck face.

"Don't worry, we won't kill you." Harry said. "At least not yet."

"That's right; we need you to prove Sirius' innocence after all." Fred said trying to look very intimidating.

"After that, well we'll see how we'll deal with you." George finished.

The four left Pettigrew in the cell and the door vanished right behind them. Dobby released Pettigrew and 'popped' out of the cell as well. Peter looked terrified and started looking for a way out but there wasn't any. The cell was airtight with only a bed and a bedpan at his disposal. He fell on the bed knowing that he was caught; he feared for his life. If Sirius ever found him he would be dead in a few minutes; he knew that much. Perhaps it was for the better; he didn't look forward to spending time at Azkaban. He wouldn't survive very long either but there he would be suffering much more.

Harry quickly wrote three little words on a piece of paper and handed it to Dobby who went to deliver it to Sirius. The four kids then went on with their business as usual; the twins were strengthening their

Occlumency while Harry and Hermione worked on their animagus form.

When Sirius read the three words “We got him” on the piece of paper Dobby handed him he smiled. Finally they had managed to capture the man responsible for the death of friends. After all those years of hoping and dreaming they were so much closer to proving his innocence. He knew that they still had to find a way to deliver Wormtail to the authorities and then they still had to be willing to accept his confession. But for now Sirius was very optimistic about the future.

The next day Ron found ‘Scabbers’ and the four kids felt a little bad for causing Ron grief but they knew they didn’t have a choice. They comforted him saying that ‘Scabbers’ had had a long and fulfilling life and that at least the poor creature didn’t suffer. Ron nodded knowing that his pet had been acting sick lately but he was still going to miss his little friend. He put ‘Scabbers’ into the small box Hermione conjured and together they buried him on the edge of the Forbidden Forest.

The week before the holidays went fast and now Harry and Hermione were at the Chamber working. Harry was feeling confident that he would manage to transform in his animagus form in the next couple days. He could feel it when he meditated; the leopard had accepted him and it was just a matter of time. So he spends every single moment in meditation wanting to surprise Hermione, Sirius and the twins.

Harry opened his eyes and stared into the beautiful green eyes of his form. Those were the eyes of a predator, someone who’s fiercely protective of his family and deadly to his enemies. He could feel the connection between them and smiled at the marvellous creature in front of him. The leopard came closer until it reached Harry and put his head onto Harry’s lap; with trembling hands Harry reached out and petted it on the head earning a loud purr of some sort.

He felt his magic connect with the animal and he never felt anything like it. It was addicting, warm and it felt right. When the feeling stopped the leopard raised his head and stared at something behind

Harry. Not knowing what was happening Harry looked behind him and tried to see what was going on. Then all of the sudden he felt another presence; just like he had felt when he first found the leopard. There was no mistaken it and his eyes searched the place in order to find where it came from. In the distance he could hear something but it was too far away to recognize it but he had felt where it came from. It was hidden in the trees and just as sudden as it had come it disappeared, leaving Harry and the leopard in the clearing.

Harry blinked and wondered what had happened here. Was it possible for someone to have more than one animagus form? He would have to look into that but right now he turned back to his first form. The leopard hadn't moved an inch and when Harry moved to pet him it sprang up and nuzzled him. Harry laughed loudly enjoying the feeling. The leopard rubbed Harry one last time before its body started to disappear into Harry's.

In the Chamber Hermione was watching Harry after she felt his magic spike for just a second. She saw a smile appear on Harry's face and looked on as slowly Harry transformed into his animagus form. She was flabbergasted by seeing the transformation; it was absolutely brilliant. The process didn't take long and now instead of Harry sat a beautiful leopard. She slowly moved towards it and stopped when it opened its eyes. She was mesmerized by how stunning they were; just like Harry's they were a vivid green and showed intelligence and caring. She raised her hand and was surprised when Harry pushed his head into it. She carefully stroked his head not wanting to hurt him but when she heard him purr she knew she did something right.

Harry was feeling fantastic; the transformation itself had been weird at the beginning but it came naturally and didn't hurt at all. He opened his eyes and was shocked by how clear and sharp everything was. He could see Hermione carefully getting closer and willed himself to move into her touch. It felt kind of weird to be petted like a normal house cat but he enjoyed it. After he let her pet him for a few minutes he wanted to see if he could move freely around the chamber. He stood on all fours and readied himself; first he walked slowly but he increased his speed every few feet. By the time he had crossed half the Chamber he felt confident enough to start running. For ten minutes he ran at different speeds enjoying the feeling of running at

high speed. When he started to feel tired he sat down in front of Hermione and tried to change back which wasn't hard at all.

"Oh Harry you did it." Hermione exclaimed grabbing him in a hug. She was so proud of him right now.

"Mione it was great." Harry said tiredly.

"Come on sit down a bit." Hermione said helping him.

Harry then told her about how he and the leopard had bonded. He also told her about the second presence he had felt shortly before bonding. Hermione was surprised to hear that Harry might have two forms even if she didn't know that was possible. They would have to look into that she realized. Now that Harry had managed his transformation she was eager to reach hers as well. So when Harry said he was going to take a small nap she started meditating.

In the second week of the Christmas holiday Harry and Hermione were seeing Remus to continue their Patronus training. So far both of them had been able to create a very thick mist and Remus had told them that this was already very extraordinary for their age. Of course they weren't happy with being able to conjure a bit of mist so they refused to stop practicing.

"Really, what you guys are doing is already amazing." Remus tried to say.

"We know Professor but we really want to master this spell." Hermione said before trying again.

"Well, remember the stronger the memory the better." Remus sighed. These two were relentless at times like this.

Harry closed his eyes and went over his happy memories. He had been using memories from over the past two years but so far he didn't have any luck. Suddenly he found a good memory; he remembered how he had met his best friend and how happy he felt when he found someone like her to be friends with. Thinking about Hermione filled him with joy and happiness and he knew that this was

the memory he needed to perform the Patronus Charm. His eyes snapped open and with a loud roar he yelled out "EXPECTO PATRONUM".

A large flash of light appeared temporarily blinding the three. When they opened their eyes a stag stood in front of them looking at Harry for orders. The stag was fully corporeal and Harry couldn't believe what he was seeing. Remus' jaw was hanging wide open at seeing the familiar form after so many years. Tears sprang from his eyes and he slowly made his way to the Patronus. Hermione was just as impressed and wondered what memory Harry had used so she turned to him and asked him.

"I used the memory of where I met my best friend and how happy that made me." Harry admitted. Hermione smiled softly and gave him a hug before concentrating on that very same memory. She too felt the power of this particular memory and pointed her wand in front of her and yelled out 'EXPECTO PATRONUM'. Remus who was still in shock of seeing Harry perform a spell that even adults had trouble with stared in disbelief as Hermione's Patronus appeared next to Harry's.

Hermione smiled when she saw a white otter next to the stag and Harry congratulated her by giving her a hug in return. They felt very proud of themselves for mastering such a difficult spell and laughed at Remus when they saw him staring at them. They then dismissed their Patronus and sat down; while they had managed to perform the spell it took a lot out of them. Remus whistled loudly and started laughing.

"Well, the two of you sure know how to surprise a man." He laughed loudly. "Well done; both of you."

"We couldn't have done it without your help Professor." Hermione said smiling.

"Nonsense; all I did was explaining some theory. You did all the rest." Remus argued.

"Professor, why did my Patronus look like my father's animagus form?" Harry asked.

"I don't know Harry; it could be a number of reasons." Lupin answered. "Maybe it's because your father represents safety from harm and a Patronus does keep you safe."

"You never told us what your animagus form was Professor." Hermione asked.

"Ah well, that's because I don't have a form." Lupin admitted.

"Is it because you're a werewolf?" Harry asked gently.

"H-How did you know that?" Remus asked scared and worried that they would hate him now.

"We've known for a while now Sir." Hermione said. "You're always gone on days with a full moon and when you get back you're tired and hurt. It didn't take us long to figure out what was going on."

"No point in hiding the truth any more then." Remus sighed loudly. He knew this day would come but he had hoped it would be a bit longer before he was found out.

"Professor you don't have to worry about us telling anyone or hating you." Harry smiled. "We don't judge you like some idiots in the Wizarding World do. You're a friend of my parents and you're a great person. We know that you're not dangerous or Dark."

Remus nodded with a few tears in his eyes and thanked them for their friendship. He then told them how he and the rest of the Marauders had met and how they too had figured out he was a werewolf. He also told them how his friends had tried so hard to become animagus' so they could join him on the day of his transformation. He laughed when he told them about the times they spend together and wished that he could feel that way again even if it was only for a day.

The Christmas holidays reached an end when all the students were back at Hogwarts for the start of the second term. The students were still in holiday spirit so there was a lot of laughing and talking going on. The Great Hall was filled with energy and Dumbledore seemed to love every minute of it while Snape was wishing he was somewhere else. He hated the noise and the cheerfulness of it all. Savoring his meal he took his goblet and drank every last drop of it. When he put the goblet on the table a strange sensation ran through his body and he suddenly felt the unexplainable need to sing and dance.

He jumped up from his chair onto the table making everyone look at him. Everyone was wondering what was happening to the Potion Master. To their surprise Snape's cloths transformed in a chicken costume and he started singing the song of the 'Chicken Dance' while performing the special little dance that came along with it. Every student burst out in laughter and even the teachers were grinning trying not to laugh. After a minute of two, Snape stopped and his cloths transformed back to normal. He noticed everyone staring at him and his face became red in anger and embarrassment. He let out a loud frustrated scream promising to find the ones responsible for this before he stormed out the Great Hall.

"Ah thank you Prof. Snape for that lovely musical intermezzo." Dumbledore said to which everyone started laughing again.

Later that night Harry and Hermione grilled the twins as they were sure that they were the ones who had caused Snape to act that way. At first they denied it but once Fred started to do the dance George admitted that they did it. They had come up with the prank over the holidays and had asked Dobby to administer the potion to Snape's goblet.

"You've got to admit that Snape did have the moves down." Harry laughed.

"He'll be pissed for weeks. Remember how mad he was when everyone kept laughing after hearing about Neville's Boggart?" Fred said picturing Snape in a tutu and shuddered.

"This will be even worse; only our class and the Ravens saw that thing now everyone in Hogwarts saw him dancing." Hermione snickered. Normally she didn't approve of such things but this was just too funny for her. Besides, Harry and the twins had a bad influence on her in that matter.

January turned into February and Harry was ready to confront Remus with the truth. He trusted the man enough to risk it and he was sure that once Remus saw the map he would be convinced. So Harry and Hermione prepared what they would have to say and had Dobby on standby so he could 'pop' Pettigrew (stunned of course) so Remus could see it with his own eyes.

"Hello Prof. Lupin may we have a word with you?" Harry asked when they entered his office.

"Of course come on in." Remus smiled.

"Thank you Sir; please bear with us for a moment." Hermione said before taking her wand and casted a soundproof charm around the office. That way nobody could hear anything that was being said except the people inside. Remus raised an eyebrow at seeing such a spell being performed but went with it.

"Sir, do you trust us to tell the truth?" Harry asked again. "Do you trust us enough to listen to the very end no matter what you might think?"

"And can we trust you not to act without hearing us out first?" Hermione added.

"What is going on here?" Remus asked but he saw that they wouldn't answer until he had answered their questions. "Fine, yes you can trust me on both accounts."

"Very well; Sirius Black is innocent. He wasn't the Secret-Keeper nor did he kill those Muggles." Harry said raising his hand so Remus would wait with commenting. "We do not expect that you believe us without proof so we've brought some with us." Hermione took out the

Marauder's Map and activated it in front of Remus showing him that it was the real deal.

"How did you get this? We thought it was destroyed years ago." Remus asked curiously.

"That's not important right now." Harry said shaking his head. "Do you remember how it works?"

"Of course, I was one of the three people who made it." Remus said a bit insulted.

"Then you know the map doesn't lie?" Hermione asked him. Remus nodded in agreement so she continued. "Tell me, what name do you see in the DADA classroom?" Remus looked at the map and froze when he recognized the name.

"That's impossible. This can't be right, is it?" he stammered.

"You just agreed that the map never lies so it must be true." Harry said before calling Dobby who appeared with Pettigrew next to him.

"This is the proof Sirius Black is innocent of the crimes he's accused of." Hermione said placing a hand on the older man's shoulder.

"H-how is this possible?" Remus said dropping to his knees.

Harry nodded to Dobby who disappeared with Pettigrew back to the Chamber. Harry then took a magical oath to tell the truth about Sirius Black and told the same story he had heard from Sirius himself. It took an hour but when he finished Remus was a wreck. He couldn't believe what he had done. For more than a decade he hated the wrong person; instead of believing in his friend he had jumped to conclusions just like everybody else and Sirius had suffered because of it.

"How do you know all this Harry?" Remus asked.

"He told me everything when I met him during the summer holidays." Harry smiled.

"You've seen him? How is he? Is he alright?" Remus asked worriedly.

"You can relax Professor; he's fine and he's been asking about you ever since he heard you were at Hogwarts." Hermione said softly.

"Can I see him? Please I need to apologize to him." Remus carefully asked.

"I'm sorry Professor but until we've proven his innocence we can't have him run around. There's too much at stake." Harry said hating to disappoint the man in front of him. "But if you want you can always write a letter and we'll make sure it's delivered."

"Thank you Harry." Remus repeatedly said already thinking about what he would write.

"Then there's only one last thing to ask." Hermione said to him. Before he could ask what that was Dobby appeared again and 'popped' the three of them to the Chamber.

There Harry explained for the third time already what they had been doing and what they were planning for the future. To say that Remus was shocked was like saying that Ron loved eating; an understatement if there ever was one. His eyes bugged out when the twins arrived halfway through the explanation and waved at him like they were long time friends. Hearing a story such as this would floor a lot of people and Remus seemed to be one of them. Before Harry and Hermione could finish talking Remus fainted.

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoyed it. Did you like how I dealt with Wormtail? I don't know if Polyjuice Potion works on animals but for the sake of the story let's assume it does lol. Anyway any remarks or suggestion are always appreciated.

Chapter 26: A new member

When he woke up Remus was thinking that everything that had happened was just a dream. But when he looked around he saw that he wasn't in his office or bedroom instead he was in a room he didn't recognize. Slowly he got up and exited the room hoping to find out what was going on here. Leaving the room he saw Hermione sitting on a cushion deep in meditation while he could hear the twins messing around in a room just on the other side. He looked for Harry but couldn't find him so he walked around searching the other rooms.

Harry was working on something that would prove to be very useful. But right now he was getting frustrated; no matter how much he tried he couldn't get the damn thing to work. It was mindboggling how complicated this project was. He was sitting in a comfy chair with the Marauder's Map in front of him. He had understood the possibilities that the Map offered; if he could make a similar map of Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade then they would be able to monitor everything from afar. They would have to design a way to separate Death Eaters from the normal people but that was a worry for later. Right now he was wishing he had some target dolls to destroy.

"Oh here you are." A voice said from the door.

"Ah Prof. Lupin; how are you feeling?" Harry asked smiling motioning to come in.

"Well, let's say I'm awfully embarrassed at fainting." Remus chuckled.
"How long was I out?"

"Not too long; about forty minutes." Harry said smiling.

"So this isn't a dream isn't it?" Remus asked already knowing the answer.

"I'm afraid not Sir." Harry replied.

"That's what I thought." Remus sighed. "And you want me to join this group?"

"We would love to have you on board as we can use every bit of help we can get." Harry nodded. "But we won't force you if you don't want to. If you decide not to join us then I'll ask you to take a magical oath not to betray us in any way."

"You don't do things without thinking them through don't you?" Remus laughed.

"We can't afford to be careless Sir; there's too much at stake here." Harry said seriously. "Voldemort will come back and when he does it's going to be ugly. That's why we need time to prepare and to get stronger. Voldemort will not pull any punches and I have no intention of letting him win."

"I understand Harry. You're just like your parents." Remus smiled. "They too understood how dangerous You-Know-Who truly was and they fought him every step of the way. Now you're doing the same thing and I'll be damned if I let the son of my best friends fight alone. You can count on me Harry."

"You have no idea how glad I am to hear you say that Sir." Harry said hugging the man he considered an uncle.

"So what are you working on?" Remus asked interested.

This launched Harry into explanation mode and he started to tell about his plan to make maps of Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade. He told Remus how he wanted to use the names Sirius had supplied him so they could monitor Death Eaters and their actions. Unfortunately he had hit a roadblock in that he couldn't figure out how the map worked making Remus chuckle. The werewolf quickly explained that the map had been one of the best things the Marauder's had ever made. He told Harry that they had spent two years on developing the Map and getting it to work right. Hearing that Harry whistled, showing his appreciation and respect for the Marauder's.

Remus promised him that he would see if he could find his notes on how they made the map but even if he didn't he was pretty sure that they would be able to figure it out. After all they had a team consisting

out of two of the original creators, a set of twins with mad inventing skills and two of the brightest students Hogwarts had ever seen. Harry had to agree that in term of brainpower they were more than strong enough.

“So what’s Hermione working on?” Remus said seeing Hermione sitting on a cushion.

“Oh she’s meditating for her animagus form.” Harry shrugged.

“Dear god; what is it with the two of you?” Remus gasped. “First you master the Patronus Charm and now you’re both working on becoming animagus’ as well.”

“Actually I already mastered my form.” And to proof it he transformed.

Remus just started laughing loudly saying that Voldemort wouldn’t know what hit him when he came back in the land of the living. Harry transformed back and laughed as well. Remus then asked if it was alright if he wrote a quick letter to Sirius so he could apologize. Harry just handed a piece of paper and a pen and left to go find the twins. They were currently occupied with performing the bone-strengthening ritual, trying to catch up to Harry and Hermione. He quietly passed Hermione who was still meditating and entered the ‘The Twin’s Lab’ as they had called one of the spare rooms. They had commandeered the room once Harry told them that they could experiment to their heart’s desire.

They were currently working on a few projects that consisted out of turning some of their prank material into possible weapons. They had tons of ideas but actually creating stuff took a lot of time and effort. But the twins loved this part; every now and then a loud explosion could be heard and Harry was ever so thankful that the Chamber was so deep beneath Hogwarts otherwise they would already been found out. He looked inside and saw that they already finished the ritual today and joined them.

“Hi guys, everything go alright?” He asked.

“No problems whatsoever. How did it go with Remus?” they replied.

“He’s in; he’s writing a letter to Sirius right now.” Harry answered.

“That’s good; he’ll be a good help and he can teach us a lot.” Fred said.

“Not to mention the pranks we could do if we worked together.” George said rubbing his hands.

Sirius was happy; he had gained back one of his dearest friends. Remus had written him a short letter explaining that he finally knew the truth about what had happened. He also wrote to say how sorry he was that it took him this long to find out the truth and that he was sorry for believing that he was capable of betraying James and Lily. Sirius quickly wrote back saying that it was in the past and what done was done. They might have lost a little more than decade but now they had the future ahead of them and once he was declared innocent they would pick up where they had left.

Reading Remus’ letter had giving Sirius an extra boost and it showed in the way he carried himself. It was amazing what a short letter could do for a man but like people said ‘it’s the small things in life that make it worth living’. Dobby would be delivering a lot of letters in the next couple weeks he was sure of that. There had to be a better way to communicate Sirius thought and suddenly the memory of a pair of mirrors came to him. He and James had used these special mirrors to communicate during detentions and during the war. It was a set of two mirrors that were enchanted to enable to talk to one another and seeing the one holding the mirror. He didn’t remember where he had left the originals but he was pretty sure he could figure out the necessary spells. With a new purpose Sirius started working on making a new pair of mirrors.

It had been a week since Remus had joined their little group and Harry and Hermione were taking a little break. Over the past few months they had accomplished much and they needed to relax a bit. They spend a lot of time with Neville who had changed so much since he arrived at Hogwarts this year. He was much more comfortable with himself and he had even joined Harry and Hermione on their daily running around the grounds.

Neville had grown a lot and not just psychically and he felt fantastic. Thanks to the help of his two friends he had gotten better at magic and his grades were much better than he ever thought he would be capable of. He was sure his Gran would be proud of him when she saw him again. She had been shocked at seeing him during the Christmas Holidays; she hadn't said anything about it but he had seen the surprise on her face.

Currently he was working at the greenhouse when he heard Harry and Hermione calling him. He remembered that they would spend the day together just having fun. He quickly excused himself to Prof. Sprout who nodded and let him leave so he could join his friends. She was happy to see Neville smile; he was a bright young man who had just been a little too shy to make friends on his own. Thankfully Harry and Hermione had pulled him along and now they were good friends.

The three of them had visited Hagrid who was tending his pets and they spend quite some time helping him. After enjoying some tea with Hagrid they headed back to the castle to get somewhere warm; even though the winter was almost passed it was still pretty cold outside. They talked and laughed about various things just enjoying the peaceful afternoon. Of course all good things come to an end and Harry sighed when he saw Malfoy make his way over to them.

"Well, well if it isn't Potty, Grangey and fatty." He taunted.

"Look guys its Blondie. Tell me Blondie how's the nose?" Harry smirked.

"Oh you're so funny Potty. But no worries I'll pay you back someday; count on it." Malfoy sneered. "Good god Potter isn't it bad enough that you hang around Granger and those Weasels but now you hang around with a squib as well."

"Shut up Malfoy. I'm not a squib." Neville bravely said.

“What was that Fatbottom? Malfoy laughed. “It’s a miracle they let you into Hogwarts but then again you can’t expect much from the son of two nutcases.”

“Take that back.” Neville said getting very angry.

“Or what?” Malfoy said trying to scare Neville away. “If you think you can scare me then you’re as crazy as your folks are.”

Harry had to restrain himself so he wouldn’t pummel Malfoy there and then but this wasn’t his fight. It was up to Neville to defend his parents’ name. They had learned what happened to his parents and how they were tortured by Death Eaters. They had been exposed to the Cruciatus Curse until their minds were destroyed. Neville had been very close guarded about it and while he wasn’t ashamed of them he was afraid people would laugh at him. It took Harry to tell him that he should be proud of them and what they had done to help defeat Voldemort.

Neville however didn’t feel the need to restrain himself and he launched himself at the Slytherin. Malfoy who clearly didn’t expect Neville to retaliate was caught by surprise and a fist impacted on his nose once again breaking it. Crabbe and Goyle were about to help their boss when they both felt a wand being pressed into their backs.

“Move and I’ll make sure you’ll wake up in the hospital wing.” Harry said in a cold voice.

“The same goes for you.” Hermione added to Goyle.

It was Prof. Flitwick who ended the fight when he passed the corridor and saw the boys fight. Though small Prof. Flitwick wasn’t someone to mess with and only one warning was enough to calm them down. Malfoy was holding his bloody nose while Neville had a cut lip and a possible a black eye. Since Malfoy was the one who bled the most he was ordered to the Hospital Wing first. Turning back to Neville he asked what had happened. It was Hermione who told him what happened as Neville was still running on adrenaline.

“Mr. Longbottom, I had the privilege to have taught both your parents and I can say with certitude that they were amongst the finest people I’ve known.” Flitwick said to Neville. “What Mr. Malfoy said was inexcusable and he will not get away with it. Nonetheless I can’t condone fighting even if I do understand the reasons why, therefore you’ll spend a week’s worth of detention with me. Do not worry about Prof. McGonagall as I will inform her what happened. Now I think it is best you get that lip and eye checked out.”

Harry and Hermione helped Neville to the Hospital Wing as he was shaking from the fight. Neville was surprised at how he had reacted; never before had he started a fight but Malfoy deserved it. Nobody insulted his parents and got away with it. From this day on the Wizarding World would meet a new Neville; someone who wasn’t afraid and who would fight for what he believed in. It might take some time before he was as brave as Harry but one day he would be standing next to him.

“Well done, Neville. I’m proud of you.” Harry said clapping his friend on the back.

“I’m not fond of fighting but Malfoy deserved that one.” Hermione admitted smiling at Neville.

“I-I don’t know what came over me.” Neville stammered. “I just couldn’t take it anymore and snapped.”

“Don’t worry about it Neville; he got what he deserved.” Harry said opening the door to the Hospital Wing. Madam Pomfrey was still working on Malfoy’s nose and when he saw the three enter the room he shot up from the bed and glared at Neville and Harry.

“Bou’bb pab bor dis.” Malfoy yelled. Of course because he was holding his nose to stop the bleeding the words were hard to understand and the three just ignored him.

It took Madam Pomfrey a few minutes before she could calm Malfoy down so she could fix his nose. She dismissed him saying yelling and screaming wasn’t appreciated in this place. She then took care of Neville who was much calmer. They thanked the nurse for her help

and went to the common room so they could enjoy the rest of the day. By evening whole Gryffindor had heard what had happened and Neville was treated like a hero. For the first time he felt truly accepted and it showed in a million watt smile.

Sirius was having fun recreating the communication mirrors so he could talk to Remus and Harry. He had already figured out how they would be able hear each other; the only thing left was the image. The spells were a variation of other communication spells and while he remembered some of them he also had to look up a few of them. He hadn't told anyone so he could surprise them. If he had to guess it would take him another week to figure things out.

February had passed and Remus was now fully admitted in the group; he had done the sleep-reducing ritual but refused the bone-strengthening ritual as that would make his werewolf transformation much harder and much more painful. When the kids asked how that was possible he told him that the transformation was painful because his bones were broken and reset. The transformation itself only took less than half a minute but it was torture every time. He did say that thanks to the 'Wolfsbane Potion' the transformation went much smoother and didn't hurt as much but the potion was very expensive; he only got it now because of Dumbledore ordering Snape to make it. Most of the time he couldn't afford paying for it. Hermione immediately went searching for a potion book that explained the process of brewing the potion. She promised that Remus would never have to worry about not having the potion as long as he lived.

So now Remus was helping Harry with figuring out how the Marauder's Map worked. More than once Harry wondered how four kids had made such an incredible piece of magic. First of all they had to make a normal map of the areas. That's why Harry and Hermione had explored every nook and corner of Hogsmeade on their last two visits to the little town. They had to have every little detail correct otherwise it would defeat the purpose of having the map.

Unlike the Marauder's Map these maps didn't need to be enchanted to appear after saying a password so that left out some of the work. The next part was the most difficult part; they now had to charm the

map so it would display the names of the people in real time. Contrary to what he first thought the Marauder's Map doesn't show just everyone's name but it only showed the names of people that had a reason to be there. Remus explained that it would be impossible to know the names of every Witch and Wizard and have it displayed on the map. Pettigrew had shown because the map recognized him since he was one of the creators.

"Do you think it's possible to have the maps recognize the names of people we want?" Harry asked.

"Sure, you just have to input them into the map by magic." Remus nodded wondering why Harry asked that question.

Harry called Dobby and asked if he could bring the list Sirius had made of known Death Eaters. Dobby nodded and returned a few seconds later handing the notes to Harry. Remus looked at the list and grinned at the names of several Death Eaters he remembered. If he put those names on the map then it would show them whenever they were at Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. It was brilliant he had to admit.

"Harry, you're a genius." Remus said laughing.

"So I have been told." Harry smirked.

One by one they entered the names into the map and spelled the map to display them in a red color that was very visible. It took a while to enter all the names Sirius had giving them but at the end of the night they had finished. The Map of Hogsmeade was then put on the wall as it measured about six feet in length and three in width. That way it was clearly visible to everyone in the room. A map of Diagon Alley would have to wait until they had time to visit and explore the town.

Around the second week of March Remus convinced the others that while learning spells is good, they also need experience using them in battle. So he proposed that they did a mock battle every day between them. The kids could see the point in that and eagerly agreed. So every night they fought each other but of course they only

use harmless magic like a tickling charm or leg-locking charm instead of battle magic. It had become a competition to see who had won the most fights in a week so they were all very enthusiastic about it.

Harry had even begun teaching some martial arts to the group; Hermione had already learned some moves but she wasn't as good as he wanted her to be. At first the twins wondered what Muggle fighting could do against magic but Harry demonstrated by fighting one of the twins. Fred had volunteered and had cast a tickling charm at Harry who just rolled out of its way and grabbed Fred's wrist before twisting it causing him to drop his wand. After seeing that they were all convinced that it would be a good thing to know some moves.

One night Dobby appeared with a package for Harry saying that Remus would know what to do with it. Harry opened it and saw that it was a mirror; wondering what the deal was he called Remus who instantly knew what the mirror meant.

"Hold it and say 'Sirius Black'." He instructed Harry. Hermione and the twins had joined them curious what was going on.

"Sirius Black" Harry said and the mirror activated showing a grinning Sirius.

"Hello pup, it's good to see you again." Sirius said happy.

"Sirius? Is that really you?" Harry asked amazed.

"Of course it's me. Who else would have such dashing looks?" Sirius joked. "These are communication mirrors; your father and I used to have a pair just like them."

"This is brilliant. Now we can talk whenever we want." Harry beamed.

"Sure can pup. We'll talk later okay? For now I'd like to talk to good old Moony." Sirius asked.

"Moony? Ah you mean Remus." Harry said nodding and he passed the mirror to the man.

The kids gave them some privacy knowing the two of them had a lot to discuss and talk about. They went back to whatever they were doing so they could talk. Harry was already thinking about using something like those mirrors to communicate between members during the holidays. Of course it would have to be much smaller so it wouldn't get noticed but the idea was there and now he had a new project to work on. Half an hour later Remus called Harry saying that Sirius wanted to talk to him.

"Pup, I've been thinking how we could prove my innocence without exposing our work." Sirius said.

"Really? That would be great because Hermione and I still haven't found anything." Harry sighed.

"It's quite easy pup. I'm going to turn myself in." Sirius deadpanned.

How was it? Let me know how you felt about it and any suggestion or remarks are appreciated. See you soon for the next chapter.

Chapter 27: Freedom at last

A very loud “You’ll do WHAT?” sounded through the Chamber alerting the others who came running to Harry asking what was wrong. Harry told them what Sirius was planning to do and pandemonium erupted until Remus took control of the situation and calmed everyone down by creating a loud bang with a spell. The four kids looked in shock at Remus who told them to calm down and listen to Sirius’ plan first and then they could discuss it.

“Now Sirius, you better have a good explanation.” Remus said sternly.

“Right, let me explain.” Sirius said clearing his throat. “I’m going to send a letter to Amelia Bones who’s the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Amelia has always been dedicated to find out the truth and she’s considered to be fair and honest. I’m sure we can convince her to meet me in person so I can present the proof of my innocence.” Here he paused a bit. “I won’t say it’s a foolproof plan but at least it gives me a chance to get my name cleared.”

“How are you going to convince her not to arrest you the moment she sees you?” Harry asked worried.

“I’ll ask if I can meet her in her office in private where I’ll take an oath to speak the truth and that I won’t harm her unless provoked.” Sirius explained. “Also I think that if she sees the Rat she’ll know something is going on. It’s a risk but one I’m confident about.”

“Okay let’s say we agree with the plan that doesn’t mean Wormtail won’t expose us when they question him.” Hermione added her thoughts.

“That’s easy enough to deal with.” Sirius said. “All we have to do is Obliviate him.”

“Sirius, obliviating people isn’t that easy.” Fred said earning a nod from the other kids.

“Not to worry; I’m more than capable of doing that.” Remus said making the others look at him. “What? You think we didn’t have to

Obliviate people during the war? One thing you should remember is that no matter what there's always a chance that you're seen and then you have to make a choice. You either let it happen or you Obliviate the person."

"Alright but I'm still not convinced about your plan Sirius." Harry sighed.

"It's the best we have. We all have to take chances in life." Sirius said knowing Harry was worried.

"Couldn't Dobby get him out if things go badly?" George wondered loudly.

Harry looked at George and smiled; he couldn't believe he had forgotten about his friend. Dobby was able to 'pop' through the wards of Hogwarts so he must be able to get through the wards of the ministry as well. He felt instantly better about the plan and after a little more prodding he agreed that it was worth the risk to get Sirius declared free and innocent. He did however say that he wanted to know when Sirius would go meet with Amelia and he demanded to be notified as soon as there was news. They agreed to execute the plan in two weeks time.

Amelia Bones had been Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement for quite some time now and she had seen some crazy things in her long career as a law enforcer. She had started out as an Auror and had made her way up to the top by being the best in every field. She had fought before and during the rise of Voldemort and had personally dealt with several of his Death Eaters. She had seen how cruel the man could be and she knew that only Dumbledore would be able to defeat such a man. She wasn't weak by any means but compared to him she was nothing. When she heard of his defeat at the hands of a mere child she had been shocked. After the war she had been promoted to her current occupation.

Earlier that year she had been stunned that someone had been able to escape from Azkaban. The fact that it was the man who had betrayed the Potters, which led to the defeat of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named made it only worse. Fudge had barged into her office

issuing orders to capture Black at all costs and her department had been searching for him ever since. Her department housed about 50 Aurors and yet the man hadn't been seen or heard from after he escaped. Amelia had been very impressed with the man's ability to outrun her entire corps; had he not been a murderer she would have asked him to join them.

This morning however she had found a letter from the man himself asking for a private meeting. She didn't know how the letter got on her desk but she was pretty sure she didn't receive it by owl. The letter mentioned proof of his innocence and that made her very curious. She had asked her secretary for the files on Sirius Black and after a first glance at it she could already see some major mistakes in the handling of his process. The biggest one was that the man never even had been questioned or got a trial. Her predecessor and the men and women in charge obviously didn't find it necessary to hear his side of the story. She didn't even want to think what would happen if the man truly was innocent; the ministry would be held responsible for destroying a man's life and it could possibly destroy the ministry's reputation if the proof could lead to incompetence on their part. Still her conscience wouldn't allow her to ignore this. She took the letter and circled the word 'YES' showing she agreed to seeing him in private and ensuring him she would listen to what had to say. She wrote down that tomorrow morning would be a good time for the meeting.

To her surprise the letter vanished from her hand and a second later a new letter dropped on her desk appearing out of thin air. This was highly alarming; the wards around the ministry were supposed to be preventing such things yet it just happened in front of her. She wondered what kind of Magic the man had at his disposal. She opened the letter and the words 'I'll be there' written on it. Now it was only a matter of time before the truth would be known.

Sirius was waiting anxiously for Amelia's reply; as far as he was concerned this was the only way he would be able to prove that he wasn't the one who betrayed the Potters. He had asked Dobby to deliver the letter to Amelia without being seen. If the ministry found out that elves were capable of passing the wards it would mean a lot of trouble. He told Dobby to stay invisible and once she replied he

was to bring him back the answer. To his relief she had agreed and he immediately wrote a letter to Harry telling him what happened. He couldn't use the mirror since Harry had classes during the day. Dobby would manage to give him the letter once Harry was alone or with Hermione.

Later that night they talked over the mirrors discussing the plan. Sirius would 'pop' into Amelia's office first and explain his story then as proof he would deliver Pettigrew. It was sound in theory and they hoped that nothing would go wrong the next day. Remus had already obliviated Peter and they had stayed out of sight so he didn't have a clue where he was, who did it to him and how he got caught. Harry was a nervous mess but Hermione managed to calm him down a bit when she reminded him that Dobby would be there every step of the way so he could save Sirius if necessary.

Amelia was ready to meet the most wanted man in Britain since Voldemort himself. She had told her secretary that she didn't want anyone to disturb her not even Fudge himself. She wanted to ensure that she could hear the whole story before Fudge would mess this up even further. It had been bad enough already that the man was possibly innocent of his crimes but if she knew Fudge he would let the Dementors kiss Sirius first and ask questions later. She looked at her watch and saw that it was almost time; she wondered how Black would arrive unseen. When she heard a soft 'pop' she quickly turned and saw a man in his early thirties standing there. To her surprise he looked nothing like an escaped criminal; he was wearing some very nice robes, was clean shaven and looked to be healthy as an ox.

"Sirius Black I presume?" Amelia asked wearily.

"That's correct Madam Bones." Sirius said with a small smile. He had to show her that he wasn't a threat.

"You said something about taking an oath?" Amelia inquired.

"Of course; I'll need my wand so please don't freak out." Sirius said not wanting her to think that he was attacking her. Seeing her nod he proceeded. "I, Sirius Orion Black do hereby swear on my life and

magic to tell the truth about what happened to the Potters and Peter Pettigrew. I also swear on my life and magic that I will not harm anyone while I'm here today unless being provoked. So mote it be."

"Thank you Mr. Black. Please sit down." Amelia said satisfied with the oath he took. "Now please tell me this 'truth', I'm most curious."

And so Sirius once again told what happened to him. He told her about the Order, about the Potters hiding but always being betrayed by an unknown traitor, he told her about the Fidelius Charm and how it worked but she was well aware of that charm, he told her how he was supposed to be the Secret-keeper but how they changed to Pettigrew to cause confusion. Finally he told her what had happened when he confronted Peter in the Muggle World and how the rat escaped. He finished by telling her that the next thing he knew after that was waking up in Azkaban.

Amelia was shocked at hearing the story; the fact that Sirius was still breathing was proof enough for her that he told the truth. You couldn't fool a magical oath; it was impossible. If you took an oath to tell the truth and you lied, death was the only result. Sirius was truly innocent of the crimes he was accused of. She couldn't even begin to understand what the man must have been through all those years.

"Mr. Black, first of all I would like to apologize for the pain this ministry has caused you." She solemnly said. "I know that nothing I say or do can erase the fact that you have suffered a severe injustice but I promise you that I will not rest until the day you're cleared of your crimes."

"Thank you Madam Bones; I knew you were the right person to see." Sirius said happily.

"Now you said something about having irrevocable proof that Peter Pettigrew is still alive?" Amelia asked.

As if Magic itself had heard her question a small 'pop' could be heard and a stunned and bound Peter appeared in front of her. She took a good look at the man; he was far from attractive and unlike Sirius he looked like he was much older than he truly was. He had gray hair but

was already starting to get bald; he wasn't all that tall and had a rat-like face with a pointed nose. She rose from behind her desk and uncorked a small vial before pouring the content in Peter's mouth. Peter's eyes glanced over and she knew the potion had taken its effect.

"Is your name Peter Pettigrew?" she interrogated him.

"Yes."

"Were you a traitor for Voldemort?"

"Yes."

"Were you the Secret-Keeper for the Potters?"

"Yes."

"Did you kill those Muggles when Sirius Black found you?"

"Yes."

She sat back down in her chair after stunning Pettigrew; she sighed heavily shaking her head at the incompetence of some of her fellow workers. If they had bothered to question Sirius at the time of his capture all of this could have been avoided. Now the political fallout could cost dozens of jobs if Sirius decided to press charges and frankly she wouldn't blame him if he did.

"Mr. Black once again I apologize." Amelia started. "Everything you've shown me today has been a huge embarrassment for this ministry."

"There's no need for you to apologize Madam Bones." Sirius said. "All this happened before you were Head of this department."

"Nonetheless this is a huge mistake that shouldn't have been made in the first place. It showed us that we were biased and unfair in our work and that is simply unacceptable." She said slamming her fist on the desk. "If you decide to press charges to the ministry I will fully support you."

"There's no need for that." Sirius said shaking his head. "The only thing I want is my freedom so I can meet my godson."

"Are you sure?" Amelia asked surprised. "Don't get me wrong I'm thankful that you feel that way because the consequences could be disastrous."

"I have no intention of bringing the ministry to its knees." Sirius said as he too understood what would happen if he pressed charges. The people of the Wizarding World were fickle and would no doubt support him. The people would demand retribution and a lot of the people in charge would be booted out of office in no time. This would destabilize the Wizarding World for months if not years and it would only give Voldemort an advantage.

"Very well; let me call one of the Aurors I trust with my life." Amelia nodded. "I assure you that when you leave this building it will be as a free man."

Amelia used a special button on her desk that would summon the Auror. Not even five minutes later a knock was heard on the door and Amelia called him in. The man's eyes widened at seeing Black and he went straight for his wand until he saw Amelia shake her head. The Auror in question had worked with Amelia for years and he could read her body language without any problems. He noticed that Amelia was perfectly calm and didn't show any signs that there was danger.

"Sirius Black meet Kingsley Shacklebolt." Amelia said introducing the Auror. "He's one of my best Auror and I trust him implicitly."

"It's a pleasure meeting you Mr. Shacklebolt." Sirius said sticking out his hand. The Auror nodded and shook the hand.

"If I may ask Madam Bones what is going on here?" Shacklebolt asked amazed before his eyes fell on a certain stunned rat-faced man. "Is that Pettigrew?"

Amelia nodded and gave the man a quick overview of what had happened and what she had learned. Shacklebolt could hardly believe his ears; in all his years he had never heard of such a screw-up. Sure mistakes were made every once in a while but this was a screw-up of epic proportions.

"I see you understand what this could mean for the ministry if Mr. Black here decided to press charges." Amelia said pausing a bit. "Luckily for us he decided that his freedom and the clearing of his name is the only thing he wants."

Shacklebolt's respect for the man doubled when he heard that and he thanked Sirius who just smiled. He was then ordered to transport Pettigrew to an underground prison cell with around the clock supervision. She also warned him about Peter being an animagus and suggested they kept the man stunned and shackled. The man nodded and left the office with a floating Pettigrew in front of him. He was personally going to guard the man so nothing happened to him.

"Alright now that's done why don't I call in some refreshments and something to eat." Amelia said noticing that it was already past lunchtime. "While we'll eat I'm calling for an emergency meeting of the Wizengamot."

While Amelia and Sirius were discussing the coming events Harry was going spare. The whole morning he had been terribly nervous and worried for his godfather. He understood that this was something that needed to be done and that this was possibly the best way to achieve Sirius' freedom but he couldn't help but worrying. Hermione had been at his side the whole time reassuring him that everything would be fine and that he needed to have faith in Sirius and Dobby.

She had been desperately hoping that Malfoy would leave them alone today because Harry would destroy the Slytherin if he pushed him too far when he was this nervous. Luckily Malfoy had been keeping his distance from them. It seemed he had learned his lesson after having his nose broken twice in such a short time. Harry hardly paid attention to the classes but Hermione reminded him that they had to act like nothing was going on. If people noticed how nervous and

anxious Harry was they would know something was up and once Sirius got declared innocent it wouldn't take long for them to make the connection. So he calmed himself by meditating and thinking about other stuff. Salvation came when Remus put his thumbs up at dinner indicating that everything had gone as planned. They would have to wait until tonight to speak to him but that didn't matter. The important thing was that Sirius was free.

Later that night Sirius called them on the mirror and the group asked question after question. Sirius told them that Amelia had come through for him and that she had listened and believed him when he told his story. He told them how he was led before the Wizengamot to testify against Pettigrew under Veritaserum and he even had to give the memories switching Secret-Keepers and the confrontation between him and Pettigrew so the members of the Wizengamot could see it for themselves. He told them about how Pettigrew had been questioned and how he admitted to be guilty and sentenced to a lifetime imprisonment in Azkaban. He told them that they would be able to read about in detail in the Daily Prophet the next day.

"Tomorrow I'm coming to Hogwarts so I can meet you for the first time." He told Harry. "We'll have to act like we've never met before."

"I understand; don't worry I'll play my part." Harry smiled. "I'm so happy for you Sirius."

"I couldn't have done it without you pup." Sirius said with a smile. "Now I'm going to get some rest and I'll see you guys tomorrow."

"Alright see you tomorrow." They all said wishing him a good night.

They didn't get much work done that night as they were too busy celebrating; Dobby had made some snacks and even brought some champagne that the group emptied without trouble. The next morning Owls delivered the Daily Prophet with the grand news of Sirius Black's innocence. Harry and Hermione read the article together.

Sirius Black innocent; Pettigrew alive

In a shocking revelation Sirius Black had been found innocent for the crimes against the Potter family and the murder of Peter Pettigrew. New evidence produced by Sirius Black himself has revealed that none other than Pettigrew was the one to betray the Potters that lead to their untimely demise at the hands of You-Know-Who. After betraying them Pettigrew framed Black by staging his own death resulting in the death of 13 innocent Muggles.

At the time Sirius Black was arrested as the main suspect and sentenced to a life-long incarceration at Azkaban. For almost 14 years Sirius Black paid for crimes he didn't commit and this reporter cannot help but question the way the investigation had been done around Sirius Black. How is it possible that a man could be found guilty for a crime he didn't commit when we have 'Veritaserum' and other ways to find out the truth? What does this tell us about our own ministry? When we asked Black how he felt about the current administration he replied the following.

"I hold no ill feelings toward the current administration. While mistakes were made, we have to remember in what time we lived at that precise moment. You-Know-Who (Black did say the name) had only just been defeated and our world was in chaos." Black said. "It was a difficult time for all of us and our leaders at the time were trying to do what was needed to protect our World. I would also like to thank Amelia Bones for her help in proving my innocence."

When we asked him what his plans for the future are he answered as followed.

"I plan to get to know my godson Harry Potter and spend some time with him to make up for all the years we've lost. Other than that I don't have anything planned at the moment."

This reporter would like to thank Mr. Black for the interview and we at the Daily Prophet wish him well.

More information on Sirius Black see page 3

More information on Peter Pettigrew see page 4

More information on the Potters see page 5

As he read the article Harry had trouble to restrain himself from shouting out how happy he was. Hermione and the twins too had to make sure they didn't shout out of pure joy. In the short time they were together Hermione had gotten very attached to Sirius. He made Harry smile and that was something Hermione loved about the man. The twins who had never met him in person already felt like they had known him for years after talking a couple of time by using the mirrors.

"Mr. Potter, you're needed in the headmaster's office." McGonagall said softly. She was still feeling shocked from reading the article.

"Yes Professor; can Hermione come as well?" Harry asked.

"I suppose you could use some support after what you've just read." McGonagall said nodding.

"Thank you Ma'am." Harry said gratefully.

Harry grabbed Hermione's hand and pulled her out of the Great Hall. Smiling they made their way over Dumbledore's office so they could meet Sirius for the 'first' time. Mentally going over what he was supposed to do and say he walked in silence never letting go of Hermione's hand.

Chapter 28: A potion, a transformation and a kiss

It had been a long week for Sirius Black. First he got his freedom granted when he had managed to prove his innocence to Amelia Bones. Then he had to go to Hogwarts where he and Harry had to pretend to meet for the first time since his parents' death. That had been interesting but they had pulled it off brilliantly; nobody had any clue that they had known each other for months let alone worked together to destroy Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

Then he had fought Albus Dumbledore, not in a duel, but on the fact that he insisted that Harry continued to live at the Dursleys to power the wards that surrounded the house. Sirius had refused to let Harry spend one more minute than was necessary in that house and Harry fully agreed. Yes the bloodwards around Privet Drive were strong, possibly the strongest but that didn't mean Harry enjoyed living there. In the end they had agreed that Harry would spend just enough time at the Dursleys to power the wards to last another year and the rest of the summer he would live with Sirius.

Of course this meant that Sirius was in need of a house and this was where it became tricky. Sirius had no intention to return to his parental home called Grimmauld Place as he hated the house and everything it stood for. It was the house where he had grown up until he left at age 16; his parents were Purebloods that fervently believed in the superiority of the Purebloods. Everything else was beneath them and when he was sorted into Gryffindor they had been furious and almost disowned them on the spot. When he left the house because he couldn't take their bigotry and stupid beliefs any longer they had disowned him for real. It didn't matter to him; he was glad to get rid of them.

No, he wouldn't return to that home if he could help it. So he had visited a certain Mrs. McPherson as Harry recommended her; he had told Sirius how pleased he was about her work and so he decided to go have a look. Who knows, he might find something interesting amongst the houses she had available. When he got there he was pleasantly surprised at the things he saw and he had taken an interest in a property a few miles west from Harry's. It was a bit

smaller but it was a recent building so he could move in immediately if he wanted to.

After visiting the place he made his decision and bought the place. Just like Harry's it was remotely distant from the other houses in the neighborhood making it ideal to place wards and the like. The fact that it had a swimming pool might have helped a little bit he chuckled. He would move in as soon as all the paperwork was done. It wasn't exactly cheap and it had taken a large chunk out of his vault but he was fine with that. He was planning on living there for a very long time. For the moment though he stayed at Harry's place making sure that nobody saw him there. He didn't want to attract attention to his godson after all.

On Harry's side he was enjoying the fact that he would be gone from the Dursleys after only a month; even then he would only be there during the nights. He had no intention on being there during the day so they could force him to do chores for them. He was looking forward to living with Sirius and he couldn't wait for the school year to end. Actually it wasn't that long anymore before the end of year exams were going to be held. It was already April and he was sure time would go fast with all the work he had planned.

The four kids and Remus had continued to work hard during the nights and the results were noticeable. For instance the Chamber had been fully renovated thanks to Dobby help. There were now eight rooms each with its own purpose and three of them had already been fully equipped. One of the rooms they had worked on was the Conference room; it was the room where they would discuss how things were going and it was equipped with a large round table where at least 10 people could sit without problem. Harry wanted a round table because to him that way no one was at the head of the table. He thought that if there was someone sitting at the head that person would have the feeling that he was the leader and the rest were obligated to listen and obey.

At a round table however there was no beginning and no end; each member would be equal and allowed to speak. He didn't want to turn this group into a leader and followers; no he wanted it to be a group of friends who fought together for what is right.

On the wall they could see an enlarged version of the Marauder's Map and the Hogsmeade Map just next to it. They still had to make the Diagon Alley Map but they had left enough space for that one as well. The Maps had taken some time to make but it had been worth it. Every Death Eater's name had been entered in the maps and showed a red nametag whenever they appeared. So far they had only seen two or three Death Eaters appear. One had been Dolohov Antonin who had spent the evening at the Hog's Head getting drunk. For the time being it didn't really matter when they saw a Death Eater as they couldn't do anything about it. But it had shown them that the Maps worked.

Another room that had been decorated was the bedroom; Remus had cast a spell to magically enlarge the original room giving them much more space. The bedroom had twelve beds and a separated bathroom with a magical shower. It wasn't exactly luxurious but it would do just fine in case of need.

The third and last room that was completed at the moment was the 'Twin's Lab' aka the Potion Lab. The twins had done a great job and it looked exactly as a scientist's lab should look like; they had built a large worktable that was filled with uncompleted projects and equipment. They also had several cauldrons ready for Potion brewing and a large amount of ingredients thanks to Dobby who went shopping every once in a while. Just like at his home they had build a small room with a stasis charm applied to it to keep everything fresh.

The other rooms like the Hospital Room and the Weapon/Changing Room had some equipment but still had to be placed or finished. They had also used one of the rooms as prison with several small cells; this was where Pettigrew had been held for a few months. For now there weren't any weapons ready but that would change once all the rest of their projects were done.

Tonight however was a special night because they would perform a special and difficult ritual that would help them later on. Harry had found the ritual in one of books Dobby had brought back from an American bookstore. It would increase their strength and reflexes with about twenty percent which was a huge advantage in his eyes. The

ritual required a potion that had been very difficult to make not to mention very long to brew.

Amongst its ingredients were Dragon blood, Vampire essence and Werewolf's hair to name a few. Each ingredient came from either a Magical Creature or being, which made it not only expensive but highly difficult to brew. Some ingredients don't work well together and have to be handled with extreme care. It also needed to simmer for about 5 months to reach its maximum potency. But it would all be worth it according to the book.

The ritual was said to be a bit painful as the potion did alter some of the recipient's DNA. The Dragon blood gave the body a small protection against spells, the Vampire Essence enhanced speed as Vampires were notoriously faster than humans and the Werewolf's hair made the muscles stronger. The other ingredients in the potion served to stabilize these three ingredients.

"Are you guys ready?" Harry asked Hermione and the twins. Remus couldn't take this Potion as it would have a violent reaction with him being a werewolf to begin with. It didn't really matter as he was already stronger because of his curse. It wouldn't have changed anything even if he could take it.

"Ready as can be." Fred said.

"Bottom's up." George happily said before all four of them downed the Potion.

They could feel the Potion running through their body and they screamed out in pain as the Potion took its course. It felt like being on fire but without the burning effect. Remus knew this was the bad part of the potion and couldn't interfere. According to the book the pain would be over in about a minute but that minute seemed to last for hours. Finally they calmed down and the four kids sat up looking very tired.

"Waw, that's something I don't want to do again." Hermione managed to say. "EVER."

"We second that." Fred and George rasped out their throat sore from screaming.

"According to the book we should feel the effect within the next few days." Harry said reading the book. "We should also try and rest as much as possible."

"Now that's something I like to hear." Fred exclaimed making them all laugh.

For two weeks nothing really special happened; classes were going great and Harry and Hermione had started reviewing for the end of year exams in company of Neville. Some of the other Gryffindors of their year had told them they were crazy for starting so soon but they ignored them. Ron especially snorted when they asked him if he would join them; they just let him do like he wanted. It wasn't as they had expected that he joined them but they wanted to ask anyway.

Sirius had called every night on the mirrors and he had moved into his new home. It was a little weird that he was going to live there by himself but he had explained his reasons. He knew that Dumbledore would want to know where Harry would be living when not at the Dursleys. If he and Harry lived in Harry's home then Dumbledore would surely notice what they were doing and that was something they wanted to hide at all costs. Therefore if he had his own home where Harry could stay during the summer than Dumbledore wouldn't look for Harry anywhere else. Also it wouldn't matter if Dumbledore visited once in a while as nothing special would be going on in Sirius' house. Harry and the rest had admitted being very impressed with Sirius' thinking as neither of them had considered anything like that.

The exams started the first week of June and lasted two weeks with in Harry's and Hermione's case 4 subjects a week. This was to give the students enough time to prepare and not exhausting them by putting all the exams in one week. Harry and Hermione weren't really worried about these exams as they had been practicing more than enough during their time in the chamber. That and they had learned much more difficult magic than that and succeeded.

Other students like Ron were much more troubled when they left the exam room and wished they had studied a bit more. Fred and George had to take their OWL's which were a requirement for almost every job in the Wizarding world so they were pretty focused on passing the most important ones. They didn't exactly care much about OWL's since their dream was to open their own shop and to do that all you needed was the money to start. But if they wanted to take the NEWT classes they needed to pass the OWL's so they made sure to do well enough.

Once the exams were over there was still a week left before returning home and Harry and the team made use of that time to make some last minute arrangements. Hermione however was close to her animagus transformation so she spent most of the time meditating. On the second last day of the year Harry was busy drawing some sketches of the uniform he wanted to make. Death Eaters were dressed in a black robe with white masks according to Remus and the Aurors had their own kind of outfit. So it wasn't more than normal that they too had their specific uniform. He had been drawing for several hours when all of the sudden he was slammed into to ground and something stood over him.

He looked in shock as a beautiful lynx stood over him with its two front paws on his chest. He laughed when the lynx licked him on the cheek before running out the room. Harry realized that Hermione had managed her transformation and laughed before he too transformed and raced after her. The twins and Remus heard the commotion and came to see what was going on. When they saw a lynx and a leopard chase each other and wrestle they smiled and clapped loudly cheering for their friends. Harry and Hermione heard them and transformed back to their human form.

"I did it." Hermione yelled loudly before running towards Harry.

"Way to go 'Mione" Harry said before picking her up and twirled her around making her laugh even more.

She wrapped her arms around Harry's neck while his hands were securely on her waist. He stopped spinning and when her feet touched the ground Hermione stared at Harry. She was mesmerized

by his smile and his eyes. For some reason she closed her eyes and leaned forward.

Harry had been staring at her ever since he stopped spinning; he saw her looking at him and too him she had never looked prettier. Her eyes showed how happy she was and he couldn't look away from them. He couldn't explain it but for some reason he closed his eyes and leaned forward.

Their lips touched and both grabbed hold of the other not wanting the sensation to end. The kiss was tentatively and a bit unsure but that didn't mean they didn't feel the love they felt for each other. The two of them had been having feelings for each other for some time now but neither of them was sure how to deal with these feelings. Now however it all made sense and they wondered how they had survived without it for so long. When they separated they smiled and held each other close not wanting to break the contact both had been wanting for so long. No words were said as they understood what the other felt and wanted.

"Okay boys, let's give those two some privacy." Remus said to the twins.

"Sure but we get to tease them afterwards right?" the twins asked with a small grin.

"We'll see." Remus chuckled.

When Harry and Hermione broke the hug they walked hand in hand to the conference room where they could talk about what had happened. Neither of them had planned for this to happen but they weren't regretting it one bit. It had happened naturally and both of them doubted that they could have handled that better on their own. They sat down and looked at each other, either one waiting for the other to start.

"Oh this is ridiculous." Hermione said a minute later. "Harry, we're best friends so we shouldn't be afraid to talk to each other."

"I guess we're just a bit embarrassed about it." Harry chuckled. "Look 'Mione, you've been my best friend since the day we've met on the train and over the past few months I've been having thoughts about how it would be if you and I would be more than just friends." He paused for a second. "I'm no good with this so I'm just going to say it; Hermione Granger I like you. I really, really like you."

"Oh Harry, I like you too." Hermione said hugging him. "I've liked you for months but I wasn't sure how you felt about me so I didn't act on it. I was afraid that you wouldn't like me in that way."

"Well, I can tell you that I definitely like you that way." Harry smiled. "Hermione, would you be my girlfriend?" he said blushing like crazy.

"I would love to be your girlfriend Harry." She whispered before kissing him.

When they left the room they had to shield their eyes as the twins and Remus waited for them to come out to set off the fireworks. Fred and George were holding up a banner that said "Harry and Hermione together at last". They were waving it like crazy while shouting and whistling loudly. Remus was taking pictures so he could show Sirius and probably use them for blackmail later. Harry and Hermione turned bright red and chased the twins and Remus throughout the Chamber. Harry had tried to get a hold of those pictures but Remus was too strong to wrestle down. Hermione had whipped out her wand and used some very unique spells to transfigure Fred and George into Freda and Georgette. She also informed them that she wouldn't turn them back until the end of the week.

Freda and Georgette took it in good stride and congratulated Hermione on her prank. The twins had a lot of success and many asked them what they had done to have deserved such a fate. Neither of them had said anything because Harry and Hermione told them that they would like to keep their relationship a secret a bit longer. They just told everyone that they had lost a bet with Hermione and that they weren't allowed to talk about it. That was enough for everyone to stay clear of Hermione for the rest of the week which suited her just fine since she and Harry wanted to spend some time alone anyway.

At King's Cross Station Dan and Emma Granger were waiting for their daughter to come home. Another year had gone so fast and they had missed their little girl; they loved to see her so happy but once every few months they hated the fact that magic took their little girl away from them. It was though watching your child grow up so fast and not be there for the important moments. They knew Hermione would tell them everything in detail but it still wasn't the same.

Sirius stepped through the barrier at platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ and saw a woman standing there; she was the spitting image of Hermione or rather Hermione resembled her as he understood that these were her parents. Seeing that they probably would have to get to know each other since the kids spend all of their time together he went over to introduce himself.

"Excuse me but are you Hermione Granger's parents?" Sirius asked politely.

"That's correct. I'm Dan and this is my wife Emma." Dan said nodding. "Do you know our daughter?"

"Nice to meet you Dan, Emma. I'm Sirius Black and I'm Harry's godfather." Sirius said hoping they wouldn't freak out when they recognized him. He had been all over the news in the Muggle world too.

"Ah Hermione did write us that Harry's godfather had been freed and cleared of all charges." Dan said but he was still on guard.

"That's right; I was framed and was recently declared innocent." Sirius nodded. "I assure you that you have nothing to fear from me."

"I'm sorry if we sounded a bit weary and distant." Emma apologized quickly.

"Please, I completely understand." Sirius laughed. "I just wanted to meet the parents of one of the brightest witches I've ever met."

That broke the ice and the three of them had a very nice conversation about the kids. Sirius told them that he had bought a house not too far from London and that he and Harry would be living there starting next month. He had to explain a little bit about how Harry needed to stay at the Dursleys for one month a year to charge to wards. Sirius didn't exactly know how much Hermione's parents knew about the Wizarding World so he left out the dangerous parts. He would have to tell the kids that they needed to talk to them; no use in hiding until it all came crashing down later.

He was a bit surprised how well he could relate to Dan and Emma. It was the first time he actually spend so much time taking to Muggle people and he had to say that they had an interesting view on the world. He had been wondering what all the electrical equipment he had found in his home was for. He wasn't totally clueless as he knew what a telephone or television was but other than that it was all a big mystery to him.

Dan and Emma on the other hand knew quite a lot about the Wizarding World and their traditions but that was not unexpected when you had a daughter like Hermione. He vowed to make an effort to get to know the Muggle world a bit better and when they heard that Dan and Emma told him he was always welcome to visit them. He offered the same thing in return. He looked at the time and told them that the Hogwarts Express should arrive in a few minutes.

And like Sirius said not even five minutes later the Hogwarts Express entered the station. Most of the kids stormed out of the train in search of his or her parents and it was quite chaotic until most people had left. Harry and Hermione weren't in a hurry so they waited until things had calmed down a little bit before getting out. Hermione noticed her parents standing next to Sirius and she waved before dragging Harry with her. After initial hugs and welcome back's they went over to Muggle side of the station knowing that Vernon Dursley would probably be waiting to pick up his nephew. Harry wasn't surprised that the man was already seeing purple for having to wait so he thought it best not to waste anymore time. He said his goodbyes and followed Sirius to meet his uncle.

"Hi, Uncle Vernon thanks for picking me up." Harry said putting his trunk into the car.

"You have some nerve boy." Vernon hissed. "I've been waiting for 10 minutes. I've got better things to do than wait for you."

"I'm sorry. Uncle Vernon, there's someone I would like you to meet. "This is my godfather Sirius Black."

"G-Godfather? S-Sirius B-Black?" Vernon said looking horrified.

"Hello Vernon." Sirius said menacingly. "You might recognize me from TV?"

"Y-you're that c-criminal that's been found innocent." Vernon stammered.

"That's right. Now I'd love to take him with me but Harry has to stay one month with you to power the wards." Sirius said looking Vernon straight in the eyes. "Frankly I would prefer if he didn't have to stay with you but it can't be helped. Now let me make one thing clear to you Vernon; if I hear that you've treated Harry badly during this time I'll make sure your body is never found. Trust me I know how to do that. Is that clear?"

"C-Crystal." Vernon said quickly opening the door and got into the car.

"Did you really have to scare him like that?" Harry snickered. "He's going to whine about it for hours now."

"I'm sorry pup but he needed to be shown that he won't get away with it any longer." Sirius nodded. "I know his kind; he won't back down until there's a bigger predator than him around."

"And you're that predator?" Harry snorted.

"Hey, I'll let you know more than one woman called me a beast before." Sirius joked. "Although, that might have been for different reasons"

“TMI.” Harry said covering his ears.

“Fine, I’ll tell you later. Go on pup we’ll talk later.” Sirius said.

“Gotcha.” Harry said waving his goodbye again.

Vernon put his foot on the gas as soon as Harry was buckled up and sped away from the station. Sirius chuckled; Vernon was nothing more than a bully and that was something Sirius could deal with. He wasn’t really worried about Harry since he would see him during the days anyway. And if something did happen, Harry was able to do magic so Vernon would be biting dust before he even got to Harry. Smiling he started whistling and walked to an empty alley where he could Apparate back home.

That’s it for third year. It’s been a great year with lots of surprises and new things and this is only the start. Coming up is Harry’s holidays before fourth year and a new member may be joining them soon. I’m looking forward to starting fourth and fifth year, especially fifth year. Let me know what you thought about the chapter and see you guys soon.

Chapter 29: Of truths and Wards

Hermione was telling her parents about the year she had and what kind of things she had learned minus the secret stuff of course. She was happily babbling away and both her parents were listening very carefully to her stories. If there was one word that was used repeatedly it was 'Harry'; she mentioned his name in almost every sentence and they recognized the signs. Well her mother already knew but to Dan this was all new. Oh sure, he too had noticed that she mentioned Harry a lot in her letters but he figured it was because they were best friends. Now however he saw the twinkling eyes, the smile and every once in a while the small sigh when she said his name.

Frankly he had been dreading for this day ever since she was born. The day his little princess fell in love; he felt happy for her but like every father he didn't like the thought about boys and his daughter. Luckily he knew Harry and trusted the boy not to abuse Hermione's love or push her into things she didn't want to do. Didn't mean he wouldn't worry though.

"Sweetie, is there something else you want to tell us?" Emma asked.

"Not really. Did I forget something?" Hermione asked surprised.

"Hermione, your father and I talked quite a bit with Sirius and he mentioned something that worried us." Her mother said.

"W-what did he say." She asked. 'I'm going to hex him if he told them about Harry and me.' She thought.

"He told us that Harry needed to go back to the Dursleys so he could power the blood wards for his protection." Dan said looking at her. "Care to explain that?"

"Oh that?" Hermione relaxed a bit. "Well, I told you about Harry's past right? How he defeated Voldemort as a baby?"

“Yes you did. You said he survived a spell that nobody ever survived and that made him famous in your world.” Emma nodded. “Is that why he need protection? Because he’s famous?”

“No mum it’s not because he’s famous.” Hermione said sadly. “It’s because the man that killed Harry’s family is still out there somewhere.”

“Wait, I thought you said that man was dead.” Dan interjected. “What was his name?”

“Voldemort Dad; his name is Voldemort.” She said. “And yes when I met Harry that’s what I thought as well. But he’s not; he’s alive somewhere searching for a way to come back.”

Hermione told her parents about how everyone believed Voldemort to be dead but that Harry and she knew better. She explained what had happened with the Philosopher’s stone and the diary and how Harry defeated him with her help. She could tell her parents were mad that she kept this a secret from them but she told them that she didn’t want them to worry about things that had already happened.

“What is Voldemort trying to achieve anyway?” Dan asked.

“To understand that you need to know something else first.” Hermione sighed. “You see in the Wizarding World there are people called Purebloods. They come from a long line of Wizards and Witches. They can trace their ancestry back to dozens of generations with everyone being magical. Then there’s what’s called Muggleborn Witches and Wizards and that’s what I am, a witch with two non-magical parents.” Hermione said.

“Why is there a difference? Isn’t Magic the same for everyone Witch or Wizard? Emma asked.

“Of course it’s the same mum but don’t see?” Hermione explained. “The Purebloods think they’re better than all the rest and there’s a lot of bigotry going on. Most of it is non-violent but some are extreme; a bit like terrorists. Voldemort was or is one of them. He believes only

Purebloods should be allowed to have magic and wants to rid the world of Muggles and non-Purebloods.”

“So Voldemort started killing people and gathering followers?” Dan understood. In a way they resembled WWII, no matter how sick it might be.

“That’s right and he was winning too. Then he tried to kill Harry and got defeated.” Hermione nodded.

“Okay we got a little of track here. Let’s go back to what you haven’t told us.” Emma said.

“Like I said we know that Voldemort will come back someday and when he does he’ll wage war once again.” Hermione answered. “But this time he’s going to go after Harry as well.”

“Because he’ll want revenge.” Dan nodded.

“Amongst other things yes.” Hermione agreed. “So Harry and I are learning as much magic as we can because we know he’ll come after us.”

“Why would he come after you, sweetie? You’ve done nothing to him.” Emma asked worried.

“It’s because of who I am, mum. I’m a Muggleborn witch, something he detests.” Hermione said hotly. “Not only am I a Muggleborn witch, I’m also smarter and stronger than most Purebloods in my year. I’m the living proof that their little pure blood theory is nothing but a load of crap.”

“Watch your language young lady.” Emma said sternly.

“Sorry mum.” Hermione apologized.

“So you’re in danger because you’re best friends with Harry?” Dan asked carefully.

“Don’t you dare say that Dad.” Hermione said angrily. “This isn’t Harry’s fault.”

“Relax sweetie, nobody said it was.” Emma said softly. “We just want to know what’s going on. We’ve lost so much time already with you being away the whole year. We just want to understand and help.”

“So you’re not going to forbid me from seeing Harry?” Hermione asked scared.

“Of course not; we love Harry. He’s a great boy and we trust him completely.” Dan quickly said wanting to reassure her.

“Answer honestly Hermione.” Emma pressed. “Are you and Harry together?”

“We got together a few days ago.” Hermione nodded blushing.

“Sweetie, are you sure you want to take that risk?” she asked her daughter.

“Mum, you once told me that when you met dad you knew he was the one.” Hermione said to which Emma nodded “Well, I have that very same feeling for Harry. If you were in my place would you give up on Dad? Wouldn’t you support and fight alongside him?”

“Yes. Yes I would.” Emma sighed knowing Hermione was right. “Fine, but from now on you tell us what’s going on. No more secrets you hear me?”

“That goes double for me, young lady.” Dan said. “And no matter how much I like Harry, if he hurts you, I’ll hurt him twice as hard.”

Hermione nodded before hugging her parents. They ordered pizza and she started telling her parents what they had been doing over the past two years. She told them that there were things she couldn’t tell them for their own safety but she assured them that once it became too dangerous she would tell them. She also advised them to talk to Sirius so they got to know each other. In the end Hermione felt better, after two years of hiding things for them she had come clean. Her

parents were still a bit mad and disappointed that she didn't trust them but had already forgiven her. A bit later Hermione went upstairs to get to bed when her mum knocked on her door waiting for Hermione to let her in.

"So tell me all about you and Harry." Emma said smirking. Hermione sighed as she knew that they would tease her mercilessly for a while.

While Hermione was getting a third degree interrogation by her mother Harry was happily eating the food Dobby had delivered. He had made the same deal with the Dursleys like he had done the year before. The 'you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone' deal was more than eagerly accepted by them since they were terrified of Sirius. He had called Dobby and asked to bring him some food and take his trunk to the house. Dobby was all too happy that he could cook for Harry Potter Sir again and had outdone himself.

When he finished his meal Harry took out his journal and listed what he needed to get done over the past few weeks. First of all he needed to go to the bank so get could look over his investments. One company he had heavily invested in over the past few years would go belly up by the end of the year and he had to sell his shares when the price was high. He also had some new investments to make one of them being several Telecom companies like Vodafone for instance. His future self had said in the letter that this would be a major investment that would bring him lots of money.

A second thing he needed to do was get second wands for him and the rest of his team. He had been thinking about that for a while now; everyone could be disarmed and having a backup wand would solve that problem. He also wanted Hermione to have a Wand Holster like he had as that was the best way to carry a wand. They would have to go abroad like Sirius had done but that wasn't a problem thanks to Dobby.

Lastly he needed to get started on the wards around his house. He couldn't explain why it seemed so important but he had a feeling that things could go badly fast in the near future. He hoped he was wrong because he could use a few more years to train and prepare but he

knew it was unlikely he would get his wish. He was sure that the coming years would be challenging to say the least. He had been looking in his book on wards last year but he had to admit that making those Ward Stones was above him at the time. Now however he and Hermione had studied a year of Ancient Runes and the symbols made more sense now. It would still be a huge task to make them but at least now he would know what he was doing.

He also wanted to use the Fidelius Charm to protect his house. Ever since Sirius mentioned that Charm he had been contemplating its use and he thought it was absolutely necessary to use it. He didn't want Voldemort knocking on his door one cold winter night after all. Also he wanted to provide a safe haven for his friends and their families. He especially thought about Hermione's parents; they would be prime targets once Voldemort learns of his connection with Hermione. He was sure that he wouldn't hesitate to hurt them in order to get to him and that was to be avoided at all cost.

The next morning Harry left the Dursleys in a very good mood; he had a delicious breakfast waiting for him when he woke up (courtesy of Dobby) and since it was still early he had even been able to take a shower in peace and tranquillity. The Dursleys avoided him like the plague and that was fine by him. Donning his necklace he called a taxi and asked to be brought to the bank as he wanted to make an appointment. Half an hour later he was back on the streets his appointment made and ready to go home. He looked for a secluded place and called Dobby who 'popped' him home.

"Ah it's good to back." Harry loudly said when he arrived.

He knew Sirius would be coming over in the afternoon with Remus so he went downstairs to the potion lab. He gathered some potion ingredients and started brewing some Potions. They already had a nice stock of Potion in 'The Room' but since he had some time and ingredients left he started on a 'Wound-Cleaning Potion' and a 'Boil-Cure Potion'. Potions like that always came in handy he figured. Once he had added the ingredients he programmed the 'Self-Stirring Rods' and went back upstairs. Thinking back on how he wanted to start on the wards he figured he could take a little scroll on his property to check out the premises.

He transformed into his Animagus form and crossed the large garden in no time. He loved his form; it gave him freedom, speed, agility and so much more. When he reached the tree line that showed the end of his property he transformed back and took a closer look at the place. The forest that was in front of him was quite large and it did serve as a natural shield. If someone wanted to get to him they needed to cross the forest which would be a bother for anyone. He figured he could extend his wards to a few feet into the forest just to be sure. It would also make it easier to hide the Ward Stones. Once again he felt really happy about purchasing this house. He raced back to the house and saw that Sirius and Remus had arrived.

Sirius watched as a leopard raced straight at them; he marveled at his godson. He had been told that Harry had succeeded the Animagus transformation and what his form was but seeing it was completely different than hearing about it. He transformed into Padfoot and sped off towards Harry trying to meet him halfway. Remus watched the big black dog and chuckled; there was no way Padfoot was as fast as Harry.

Dog met Leopard and a game of chase and wrestling was the result. Padfoot was introduced to the strength and speed of Harry's animagus form and had to admit that it was superior to his own. After ten minutes of roughhousing they stopped and transformed back. Laughing and joking they joined Remus on the veranda to discuss the plans for the summer.

"Say Sirius, doesn't Harry need a Marauder name?" Remus said suddenly.

"Now that you mention it Moony; we definitely need to uphold that tradition." Sirius said happily.

Remus explained to Harry that all the Marauders had their own name derived from their Animagus forms. Sirius was Padfoot; James was Prongs and he was Mooney. So as the son/godson/adoptive nephew of the Marauders he needed one as well. Harry happily agreed and started thinking about a fitting name.

“What about ‘Spot’?” Sirius said.

“That’s not half bad. I mean you do have a lot of black spots on your fur.” Remus said nodding.

“Alright ‘Spot’ it is then.” Harry said agreeing.

The rest of the day Harry was spend by relaxing and enjoying the good weather. Harry figured had deserved a few days of relaxation; that didn’t mean he just sat there doing nothing. He started reading on the process of creating the Ward Stones and with Remus’ help he figured out the design and where they should be place to have maximum power. The Ward Stones weren’t made of just any stone; in fact the stone itself wasn’t that expensive if bought in its blank state. What did cost a lot was buying them engraved with Runes and ready to use but if you had the knowledge and the time to engrave your own then it was pretty cheap.

Harry asked Dobby if he had the time to go and buy a small supply of stones to which the elf said that he would always have time for his master’s request. Harry nodded and told him what he wanted and how much stones he wanted. He and Remus had calculated that they would need at least 5 stones for maximum efficiency so he ordered twice as much just in case. Besides he needed to have spares in case the made an error anyway. When Dobby finally returned an hour later he told Harry that he had to search four stores to find the necessary amount of stones.

Remus chuckled at how Harry had apologized to the elf before taking one of the stones to get a better look at them. He had heard of them but he had never seen them before as he didn’t have the money or a home to protect. Only large properties were in need of Ward Stones since the wards had to cover such a big surface. Small homes like normal Witches and Wizards had were easy enough to protect with just a normal ward.

“Alright Harry, let’s see if we can get this right.” Remus said.

“Sure thing.” Harry said sitting down.

“Okay, the book says that we need four Corner Ward Stones and one Master Ward Stone. The Corner Ward Stone go in each corner of the area you want to protect which is obvious of course. The Master Ward Stone is placed inside the Ward and is used to monitor and to add or remove a particular ward.”

“Wait, add and remove a ward?” Harry asked surprised. “How does that work? I thought we had to engrave the stones now with the Runes.”

“Let’s see.” Remus said reading that part again.” Oh, I get it. It’s not that hard. You see, the Corner Ward Stones get engraved with the Runes for Protection, Guarding, and Defense amongst others. Each ward needs those Runes to work while the Master Ward Stone acts like a control panel that command the Corner Ward Stones from a distance.”

“So if we want to add a ward next year all we have to do is engrave the Ward’s Rune sequence in the Master Ward Stone?” Harry asked understanding it a bit better.

“Correct, when the Master Ward Stone has that then the Corner Ward Stones create the ward.” Remus nodded. “In fact it’s the Master Ward Stone that is going to take all the work to engrave and the charge it. The beauty of such a Master Ward Stone is that it constantly takes the Magic out of the air and uses it to strengthen the wards.”

“How does that work?” Harry asked again surprised.

“Well, if we say that magic is energy then every time we use it a part of that energy is lost.” Remus tried to explain. “That energy is what the Master Ward Stone absorbs and uses it for the wards. It’s the same at Hogwarts; the reason why the wards around Hogwarts are so strong is because for centuries the Master Ward Stones have absorbed the excess Magic from the students.”

“So the more magic we use inside the wards the stronger they get?” Harry asked just to be sure. “That’s bloody marvelous.”

"It's quite ingenious isn't it?" Remus smiled.

Sirius who had been taking a nap joined them and together they discussed what kind of wards they should use. A few of them were the most standard ones like the 'Muggle-Repelling Ward' or the 'Notice-me-not Ward' but Harry wanted more than that. He wanted to make sure that his home was absolutely safe from anyone even to people as powerful as Voldemort or Dumbledore. Remus then proposed to erect a Blood-Ward around the place.

"You mean like at Privet Drive?" Harry said hesitant.

"No, a Blood-Ward is where you add a drop of blood of the person who can get through the ward without problems." Sirius explained quickly. "The ward will recognize the person and won't activate. If they don't recognize the person then they won't let them through. There considered Dark Wards because they require blood but until a few decades ago they were standard wards on most homes."

"I guess the Ministry outlawed them now, right?" Harry sighed.

"You guessed right. However what they don't know doesn't hurt us." Sirius winked at Harry.

"Let's use them; we can't get to careful." Harry said determined. "First of all I want to engrave the Fidelius so nobody can find this place by coincidence."

"Harry, the Fidelius Charm is a charm like the name says." Remus shook his head. "It's not a ward so it doesn't need to be engraved in the Master Ward Stone."

"Oh, my bad." Harry said feeling kind of stupid not to have noticed that. "So do either of you know how to do the charm?"

"Of course we do; we did it this morning for Sirius' home." Remus chuckled. "Haven't you noticed that you can't remember where he lives?"

“Hey, you’re right.” Harry said a few seconds later. “Where do you live Sirius?”

Sirius laughed and grabbed a piece of paper and a pen and scribbled something down. He handed it to Harry who read it.

‘Sirius Black lives at Burlings Lane number 32, London near Baston Wood’

Immediately the information surrounding Sirius’ home came back and Harry nodded before burning the piece of paper. He turned to the two Marauders and asked if they could do the Charm now so he wouldn’t have to worry about it anymore. They nodded and they walked to just outside the gates while Remus explained a bit how the charm was performed. One they reached the gate they asked Harry who would be his Secret-Keeper.

“I’ll be my own Secret-Keeper.” Harry said. “I would have to be pretty stupid to betray myself.”

“Very well, let’s get started.” Remus said taking out his wand.

The Fidelius Charm itself wasn’t all that hard to do Harry realized after casting it. Sure it took a few tries before he got the wand movements right but after that it was a piece of cake. He quickly told Sirius and Remus the secret and called Dobby. He asked him to bring the piece of paper to Hermione and to destroy it after she had read it. Dobby nodded and ‘popped’ away.

Hermione was in her room working on some of her homework. Last night she and her mum had talked for hours about Harry and about love and relationship in particular. While a bit embarrassing Hermione had greatly enjoyed talking with her mother like that. It was something she had never done before; sure they had talked about other things but never about boys before. Her mother had told her that she was very glad for Hermione that she had found love so soon and while she was a bit worried she was sure they would be a great couple. Hermione told her that she missed Harry a lot more than she had expected to which her mum smiled and said that it was a normal reaction to miss someone you love that much.

Hermione was glad that they wouldn't go on a holiday this year but frowned when her dad told her that they would take two weeks of holiday at home. The reason why they didn't travel this year was that two of their associates were sick and they would be on call in case it became too busy for the other dentists to keep up. So they would stay at home and relax in case someone called; this meant that Hermione wouldn't be able to leave during the day which saddened her. So she did the only thing she could do at home which was her homework for the summer.

Suddenly she heard the familiar 'pop' of Dobby and turned around. She was glad to see the little elf as she had grown quite attached to it. Dobby was a godsend in many situations and she was very grateful for all he did for them.

"Hello Dobby, how are you?" She asked.

"Dobby is doing fine Miss Grangey." Dobby said happily. "Dobby brings message from Master Harry Potter sir."

"Thank you Dobby." Hermione said taking the letter and opened it.

"Harry Potter lives at Single's Cross Lane 11, London near Piece Wood"

Hermione blinked and realized what had happened; Harry must have performed the Fidelius Charm and now she knew where he lived. She gasped as the piece of paper erupted in flames. She looked at Dobby who said he was ordered to destroy the paper once she had read it. Hermione nodded and asked if Dobby was willing to deliver a letter to Harry. Dobby nodded and 'popped' away. Hermione sighed and continued working on her homework hoping that these two weeks would pass quickly.

Chapter 30: Discussions with the Grangers and Names

Fred and George Weasley had the ability to make everyone crazy but currently they were driving Molly Weasley up the walls. Summer holiday had only just started and already she had been wishing it was September again. While the twins always were a handful to have around this summer it went beyond everything. First they would sit in their room for hours on end which scared Molly more than anything because she knew that they were busy inventing god knows what. When they finally came down it was mostly to prank Ron and Ginny until she had to intervene before things got really messy.

Ron seemed to have it the worst; so far they had transformed him in a yellow canary, had given him something that made his nose bleed until he took the remedy (that one had freaked her out) and made his mouth disappear. Ron was unable to defend himself as they used different means every time. He also couldn't resist the challenges they gave him by taunting him or tricking him into doing what they wanted.

Ginny was mostly spared since she was the youngest and she had some incredible blackmail material on them. It wouldn't do if their mother found out that they were planning to open a joke shop. She would go spare and do everything in her power to prevent that. She just didn't understand the beauty that is pranks.

Harry was frowning after he read Hermione's letter where she told him that her parents had confronted her about what was going on. He wasn't mad at her because he knew just how much she disliked lying to them. No, he was frowning because he didn't know how he should address this issue. He understood that Dan and Emma were worried and that they had the right to know what their daughter was getting herself into. Deciding that he needed to talk to someone he went to see Remus.

"Moony, do you have a minute?" He asked the Marauder.

"Sure Harry, what's wrong?" Remus said putting down his book.

“Well, Hermione’s parents wanted to know what was going on in the Wizarding World and they asked her a lot of questions.” Harry explained. “She answered most of them without saying anything that might hurt us but she hated it that she had to omit things.”

“So you think it might be best if we told them everything?” Remus asked.

“It’s just that I can understand how they feel.” Harry sighed. “Hermione is gone most of the year and they hardly see each other as it is. So of course they’re worried and want to know what she has been doing. Also I don’t want Hermione to risk angering her parents because of me.”

“Actually I was going to talk to you about this subject later on.” Remus said. “I think it’s best if we tell them what’s going on. No matter what happens they will find out and I’d prefer it to be when we are in control of things. If we have to explain everything when Voldemort has returned it might blow up in our faces.”

“So should I invite them over?” Harry asked.

“That would be the right thing to do.” Remus nodded glad that Harry understood this.

“Okay, I’ll write a letter now and give it to Dobby.” Harry said thanking Remus before he left to his room.

Harry wrote a quick letter explaining that he agreed that Dan and Emma should be notified on what is happening and what they’re doing. He thereby invited them over that weekend so they could spend some time together and they could answer all their questions. Harry realized that this might take a long time so he also invited them to stay the night. Without even being asked Dobby just ‘popped’ to Hermione’s and gave her the letter. A smile appeared on her face when she read the letter and she was very glad Harry was so understanding about all of this. She asked Dobby to wait for her and raced downstairs to tell her parents the news.

"Do you just say that Harry invited us to HIS house?" Dan asked shocked.

"Euhm yeah. All will be explained this weekend." Hermione said. "So it's okay right?"

"Of course honey, you tell your boyfriend we'll be there." Emma chuckled.

"Thanks mum." Hermione yelled already halfway up the stairs.

"He has his own house?" Dan looked at Emma who shrugged. "What did we get ourselves into?"

"Oh relax Dan besides did you see how happy our little girl is?" Emma said.

"Unfortunately I have." Dan sighed. "There's no way I can take that smile away from her no matter what Harry's involved with."

"Things will be alright, I'm sure of it." Emma said patting her husband on the shoulder.

Dobby told Harry the good news and he immediately started planning for the discussion they were going to have. Out of his head he could already tell what kind of questions he would receive so he wanted to be prepared. Remus and Sirius helped where he seemed to have trouble and by the time Harry had to leave back to Privet Drive he felt certain that he would be able to explain everything to their satisfaction.

The rest of week Harry occupied himself by working on those Ward Stones with Remus' help. Together they had figured out how to make the Wards the most efficient and one Ward was already cast. It was a Notice-Me-Not Ward and covered the entire property. The next Ward that they were going to erect was the Muggle-Repelling Ward but they would wait until after the weekend to activate it. Harry had also made a Map of the property that worked like the Marauder's Map. It would give a warning if someone came to close to the location of house. Sirius did the same and made one for his house as well but he also tied it to the Wards. That way when someone did manage to get

through the Wards they would still be alerted by the Map. Even though the Wards were a second line of defense thanks to the Fidelius Charm they didn't want to take any risks.

Making the Ward Stones took a lot of time out of Harry's busy work schedule but it was worth it if his house would be protected. He would also try to convince Hermione's parents to place a few Wards around their house just as a precaution. The rest of his time he brewed a few potions, went to the bank to deal with his investments and just relax a bit. Speaking of investments, Sirius had gone to a different bank and had invested in the same companies Harry did. He went even a few steps further by telling the man in charge that he wanted to buy some small businesses that would give him a steady income. He bought just enough shares to have a yearly income but not enough so that he would have to deal with the running of the businesses.

By the time Saturday evening came Harry was a nervous wreck; while he wasn't nervous to meet Dan and Emma again he was still worried about how they would react. Hearing that your daughter's friend was preparing to fight a war with a powerful Dark Lord wasn't exactly good news. Sirius and Remus had tried to assure him that everything would turn out okay but they only half succeeded. When Dobby 'popped' away Harry took a deep breath and got ready.

Hermione and her parents appeared in front of the house and Dan and Emma didn't see anything. They were about to ask Hermione where the house was when Harry appeared behind them. Hermione noticed him first before she ran towards him; she missed him terribly and so she hugged him like crazy before kissing him. Harry was shocked that she would kiss him in front of her parents but slowly relaxed in the kiss. They broke the kiss when Emma softly coughed and embarrassed the kids turned to them.

"Hello Harry, it's so good to see you again." Emma said giving him a hug. "Hermione has been missing you like crazy."

"Mum!" Hermione said loudly.

“How’ve you been Harry?” Dan asked politely.

“I’ve been fine Mr. Granger.” Harry said a bit afraid how her father would feel about them being together.

“Don’t worry Harry; I’m not going to cause you any trouble for dating my daughter.” Dan whispered smiling. “I can tell you make her happy.”

Harry visibly relaxed and handed a piece of paper to Dan and Emma telling them to memorize the address. They didn’t understand it but they did as they were asked; when the asked what was next Hermione pointed behind them making them turn around. To their surprise there was now a gate and a driveway that they had somehow missed before. Harry opened the gates and led them inside while staying close to Hermione.

Dan was impressed with the size of the driveway; it was big enough to pass two cars and it was nicely kept. He followed the path and when he turned the corner his jaw dropped. Emma who was admiring the different bushes bumped into him and looked to her husband before turning to see what he was looking at. When she saw the house she couldn’t believe her eyes. Hermione had said that Harry had a house but this was unbelievable.

“H-Harry is that really your house?” she asked amazed.

“Yep, do you like it?” He asked her.

“It’s amazing. How could you possibly afford such a place?” Dan said rubbing his eyes just in case he was seeing things.

“I’ll tell you all about it later on. But for now let me show you around.” Harry smiled.

If they were amazed at seeing the outside of the house then they were stunned into silence by the inside. Harry had managed to make a warm and inviting house and Emma fell in love with the kitchen. She loved the design and the outlay build for comfort and effectiveness. Dan loved the veranda and the Jacuzzi best; he was

one of those men who enjoyed just doing nothing. He wasn't much of a handy man nor did he love gardening. If he had a day off he enjoyed a good book and a glass of wine while sitting in his comfy chair.

Harry introduced Remus and together the six of them went to the veranda where drinks and a few snacks were prepared by Dobby. Explaining to Dan and Emma what Dobby was had caused some scares especially when he 'popped' around the house but once they got used to him everything went just fine. They enjoyed a few minutes of small talk until Harry decided to get to the main point.

"Alright, first of all I would like to apologize for lying to both of you." Harry said. "Believe me, it was not easy but it was necessary."

"Harry, you don't have to apologize." Emma said smiling at him. "We know you're a good kid and we trust and love you just as much as we did before." She said quickly going over to him so she could give him a big hug.

"Thanks Emma; you have no idea how much that means to me." Harry said letting out a deep breath. "Let me tell what happened on my ninth birthday."

Harry explained everything that he had done since the day he received that letter. Dan and Emma listened closely and didn't interrupt as they were too stunned to be able to say a word. Hermione added here and there so Harry could gather his thoughts before continuing. When he was finally done Dobby said that dinner was ready so they went inside and enjoyed the food Dobby had prepared for them. During the meal they talked a bit but generally decided to wait after desert to tackle the big things.

"Is it even possible to send something back through time?" Emma asked amazed.

"I don't know if it's possible at the present but it could be in the future. We do have other Time-Related magic though." Remus explained. "There's a magical device called a 'Time-Turner' that allows you to manipulate time for a specific period of time."

“That’s incredible.” Dan said clearly impressed with what the Wizarding World was capable of. “Can you imagine the kind of things people could do if they had a device like that.”

“Ah, I have to warn you though.” Remus quickly said. “There’re a certain number of rules you have to follow lest you create a paradox and erase your own existence.”

“That would be bad indeed.” Dan agreed.

“As interesting as this is why don’t we get back to the original subject.” Emma said quickly before Dan and Remus started discussing Time-Travel and its dangers in detail. “What are you planning to do Harry?”

“Well, I plan to get as strong as possible so I can fight him and those who follow him.” Harry said. “Unfortunately I can’t do this alone; so when time comes we’ll need to start our own army. A group of people I trust and who are willing to fight for what is right.”

“You do know that you will be forced to kill at a certain point? Can you live with that?” Dan asked concerned.

“I won’t like it and I’ll definitely try to prevent it as much as possible but if that’s what it takes then yes, I’ll kill.” Harry said determined. “If killing a monster that rapes, tortures and kills innocent men, women and children can save dozens of lives then so be it.”

“What about you Hermione?” Emma asked.

“The thought of killing someone scares me, mum.” Hermione said softly. “But I agree with Harry. Sometimes there’s no other way.”

They discussed until the early morning hours and it was a very tired group that went to bed. It had become clear to Dan and Emma that the Wizarding World was far from being the perfect world they thought it was. When they heard that Magic existed, they thought that everything could be solved by it but the past week had definitely destroyed that vision. They had discussed Wizarding politics and Dan

jokingly said that it was even worse that Muggle politics and possible corrupter too. They talked about the unfair treatment of people like Remus (here they were shocked again that someone as nice and intelligent as him would be treated like dirt because of his infliction) and the idiocy of the pureblood theory. Dan and Emma knew that they wouldn't be able to convince Hermione to leave the Wizarding World as Magic was a part of her and she would never abandon Harry. With a heavy heart they accepted the fact that if she was going to fight then she better well train very hard and kick ass when the time came.

Morning came all too soon for most of them; Harry however was already up and blasting away at the target dolls. An immense weight had dropped from his shoulders last night when Dan and Emma were told about what was going on. He had also felt bad for lying to them. Actually it wasn't exactly lying it was more covering up the truth but it bothered him nonetheless. Today however he had gotten up and felt much better about everything.

The Granger family had woken up from a short but good night sleep; the beds were fantastic and they had slept like new born babies. Hermione told them to follow her so she could see what kind of training they did. When they entered the gym they found Harry who was still firing spells at the targets; Dan and Emma looked in wonder at the young man in front of them and had to admit that what they were seeing was very impressive. Hermione however was staring at her boyfriend's chest that was covered with sweat running over his muscles. Emma saw her stare and smirked.

"Harry looks good doesn't he?" Emma whispered in her ear and burst out in laughter when her daughter flushed bright red and started stuttering.

Said wizard heard the noise and turned around; he saw the Grangers standing there. He grabbed a t-shirt and quickly put it on. The three of them went over and wished him a good morning. He got a kiss from Hermione though. The kids then explained what kind of training they did here and Dan shuddered at the amount of exercises they did.

Emma asked Harry what he was doing and he told them about the dolls.

“So they’re unbreakable?” She asked.

“Well, at least until the charm wears off.” Harry said. “After that they’re easily broken.”

“That’s a nice feature.” Dan said. “Not having to worry about it breaking every time.”

Harry excused him to go take a shower while Hermione demonstrated some of the spells they had learned. She showed them a few combos they had made existing out of the Bone-Breaking spell followed by a binding and a stunning spell. Emma was a bit shocked about the brutality of it but figured that it was better for a Death Eater to suffer than her daughter. Hermione also demonstrated some of her martial arts moves on her father who had to hear Emma joke about how he got his butt handed to him by a girl.

“So have you two shown your animagus forms yet.” Sirius asked them at the breakfast table.

“What’s an animagus?” Emma asked interested.

“We’ll show it to you after breakfast.” Hermione said taking another piece of toast.

Once breakfast was over they went to the garden and Sirius explained the Animagus transformation in theory. He then showed it to them by transforming into Padfoot. The Grangers thought that it was kind of weird but in a cool way. They asked him a few question and then asked what the kid’s forms were. Harry transformed first and a second later Spot was running around the garden at great speeds before sitting down in front of Emma who petted him on the head. Hermione not wanting to be outdone transformed as well and a lynx appeared and walked over to Dan.

“My god, that’s bloody amazing.” Dan exclaimed.

“Hey, Hermione still doesn’t have a name for her form.” Harry exclaimed when he transformed back.

“Name?” Hermione asked.

“Sirius is Padfoot and I’m Spot.” Harry explained.

“Euhm let’s see.” Remus and Sirius said. “Well, the paws of a lynx are a distinctive feature that allows them to run on snow so what about Paws?”

“Paws? I like it.” Hermione said nodding liking her new name.

While the grown-ups were talking a bit Harry and Hermione took the opportunity to spend some time alone. They walked around the garden hand in hand talking about the last few days. Hermione was also very relieved that her parents now knew what was going on. She told Harry that she was kind of surprised at how well they took it all. When they crossed the corner out of sight Hermione grabbed Harry into a kiss.

“I’ve missed you so much.” Hermione said when she pulled back.

“Me too.” Harry said before hugging her close.

They sat down on the veranda and just snuggled a bit knowing that they only had a few hours left together before the Grangers went back home. They went inside when Sirius called for them wondering what was going on.

“Alright you two sit down.” Sirius said.

“What’s going on?” Harry asked curiously.

“While the two of you were outside we discussed some things.” Remus said. “Harry as you know, you have to go back to the Dursleys in the evenings but during the days you’ll be here to train as planned.”

“Hermione, your father and I have decided that you will come and train with Harry every day under supervision of Sirius and Remus.” Emma said. “We want you to be strong enough to fight these monsters so we don’t lose you.”

“Hermione Jane Granger, we trust you to be responsible now that you and Harry are together.” Dan said looking at both teens. “We all know how it feels to be in love but don’t rush into things okay.”

“Dad, what do you think Harry and I are doing?” Hermione said a bit mad. “We haven’t even thought about that.”

“I know honey but when you’re in love, it’s easy to rush into things.” Dan said calmly. “We trust you and Harry not to do anything stupid.”

“Don’t worry Dan. We’re both responsible enough and besides we’re only 14 and 15 years old.” Harry said. He understood Dan worries but they were unnecessary.

“That’s all I wanted to hear.” He said happy.

“Dobby will ‘pop’ the two of you over every morning at 6 o’clock to start training.” Sirius said grinning. “Then we’ll start with condition training, spell casting and hand to hand combat. In the afternoon we’ll work on brewing potions and learning new magic.”

The two teens nodded not really bothered with the schedule as it was mostly the same as they had planned to do. They actually looked forward to start learning new magic and getting stronger. Harry especially looked forward to study more about Wards and wanted to start on some of the stronger spells they had collected over the past three years. Now that they had a well enough basis on magic they could start with the heavy stuff. Hermione was thinking the exact same thing and shivered in anticipation of what she was going to learn.

Dumbledore wasn’t a happy camper; he was currently reviewing some memories in his pensieve of the discussions he had had with Sirius about Harry. He was sure Sirius was going to have a bad influence on Harry with his prankster attitude. Not only that but Harry

wasn't anything he expected when coming to Hogwarts. Oh he was happy to see that the boy was in good health and he seemed to be very intelligent which would be a very good trait when the time came to face Voldemort.

He had gotten a bit worried though when Harry asked him about the reason Voldemort had come after him at the end of his first year. He was shocked at how Harry casually told him that he would study and train hard to fight Voldemort. It worried him that Harry might lose sight of what's important by focusing on revenge. He wanted Harry to enjoy his childhood while he still had the chance but apparently Harry didn't care all that much about being a kid.

Then in his second year he had learned that Harry was a Parseltongue just like Voldemort was. He had reassured Harry that it was something he received from Voldemort and that it was nothing to worry about but for a split second he too had worried about it. Then at the end he and Hermione had exposed Lockhart by stunning and bounding him only to leave him for the Aurors who arrested him for illegal Obliviating of people and forgery. The poor man was sentenced to jail for several years and while Dumbledore knew and agreed that the man needed to be punished he was a bit concerned at how casual Harry had been about sentencing a man to jail.

Now only a few weeks ago Harry protested against going back to the Dursleys. That was what Dumbledore feared the most; those wards surrounding the house were the only wards that he trusted enough to protect Harry. He knew that Harry didn't enjoy his stay with his family but it was for the greater good. The Wizarding world would need Harry Potter alive when Voldemort returned. If something happened to the boy the whole Wizarding World would be at risk and he just couldn't let that happen. He would have to talk with Sirius and Harry again he realized but unfortunately it would have to wait until he had time. The summer holidays were always filled with his work for the Wizengamot and the meeting with the teachers about the last school year. Yes, he would definitely have another chat with Sirius about Harry's safety.

Thanks for reading and let me know what your thoughts are about the chapter or the story.

Chapter 31: A Trip and Nymphadora Tonks

The month of July had passed very quickly after the Grangers had been told about the situation and allowed Hermione to 'pop' over to Harry's place to train. Each day they trained and studied all while having fun and pulling pranks with Sirius and Remus. The two Marauders' pranks and silly behaviour was a much needed alternative for the more serious Harry and Hermione. Sirius had noticed that if they would let the two of them do what they wanted they would study from morning till evening and that was something he wouldn't allow. So he made a deal with them that they would study hard but have fun as well. When he decided that they did enough for the day they played games or pulled pranks. Sometimes they went to see an early movie or went swimming but overall they had a very fun and rewarding month of July.

Today was Harry's birthday however and the last day he had to stay at the Dursleys until next summer. He couldn't wait to leave but unlike other days Dobby wouldn't 'pop' him over. He had to wait until Sirius came to get him; Harry had no idea how he would leave as he was pretty sure that Sirius couldn't drive a car. Harry patiently waited outside and raised his head when he heard something approach. A large motorcycle entered the street and Harry sat back down. He snorted knowing that definitely wasn't Sirius. But to his surprise the vehicle stopped right in front of him.

"Hello pup ready to go?" Sirius asked smiling at Harry's shocked face.

"Sirius? What is going on here?" Harry asked surprised. "Can you really drive that thing?"

"What's that supposed to mean? Of course I can drive it; it's mine." Sirius said.

"Wow that's awesome." Harry said taking a closer look at the motorcycle.

"She's a beauty isn't she?" Sirius smirked.

“She? You pretend it’s a girl?” Harry snorted loudly.

“Of course it’s a girl.” Sirius said affronted. “I only ride girls.”

“You really have to stop with those sexual innuendos.” Harry sighed.
“Now, how about we get going?”

“Alright pup; get on the back and hold on tight.” Sirius said.

Harry did as he was asked and climbed on holding Sirius by the waist. The machine roared to life and left Privet Drive at high speed. Harry was holding on for dear life but he trusted Sirius enough not to do anything stupid. After a few minutes Harry relaxed and enjoyed the feeling. Riding a bike felt a lot like flying a broom he realized. He looked at the fast changing scenery and wondered where they were going. The trip took about half an hour and suddenly Harry recognized the street they were driving in; it was where Hermione lived.

Sirius stopped on the driveway and let Harry get off the bike. He loved riding it; before he got locked-up in Azkaban he could ride for hours on end just enjoying the wind in his face. He was glad that Hagrid still had the motorcycle and that it still worked like it used to. The bike had several hidden features that he kept secret for now.

“Did you like the ride?” Sirius asked.

“It was great; it’s a lot like flying a broom.” Harry said happily.

Clapping Harry on the back they went to the front door and rang the door. They didn’t have to wait long and the door opened revealing Hermione who grabbed Harry in a hug and kissed him. Sirius smiled and went inside giving them some privacy. Ah to be young and in love again he thought.

“Happy Birthday Harry” Hermione said when they finally broke the kiss.

“Thank you ‘Mione.” Harry said hugging her close again.

"Come on everyone is waiting." Hermione said softly. Harry nodded and followed her inside.

When they entered the room Remus, Sirius and the Grangers all wished him a happy birthday. Presents were exchanged and cake eaten. When they finished the cake Sirius stood up and addressed everyone.

"First of all, I would like to thank everyone here for making this day so special for my godson." Sirius said. "I'm happy to know that Harry had the Grangers to wish him a Happy Birthday over the past two years. I'm even happier that I'm capable of celebrating this year and for hopefully for the next several dozen years to come as well."

"I hope so too Padfoot." Harry said.

"Since this is the first birthday that I'm able to celebrate with you I thought of a special gift." Sirius smiled. "As you know we planned to visit America for a day to get some supplies so why not spend a few days and visit a few things? That's why Dobby will 'pop' us, meaning Hermione, Harry, Mooney and myself to New York where I booked us a one-week stay at the Sheraton Hotel."

"T-The Sheraton Hotel? Sirius, that's quite an expensive place." Dan said. They had agreed to let Hermione go with them since Sirius and Remus would be there to supervise and take care of them.

"Don't worry Dan. I took care of everything." Sirius said.

"Thank you Sirius, that's fantastic." Harry said giving the man a big hug.

"When do we leave?" Hermione asked excited.

"We leave as soon as we're done here." Remus said knowing that the kids would be eager to leave. "So you better start packing."

The kids raced upstairs so Hermione could pack for a week stay. Harry called Dobby who had already packed for his master in advance. Harry chuckled thanking Dobby for being such a good elf

which made the elf blush like crazy saying that his master is the best master any elf could wish for. Hermione smiled at seeing the two of them interact; Harry truly considered Dobby as family and treated him so well. She was very proud of her boyfriend in that matter. Half an hour later they had packed and went downstairs. They quickly said goodbye to Dan and Emma who told them to be careful and to have a great time. Dobby appeared and 'popped' them one by one to an empty alley just behind the hotel they were staying in.

Checking into the hotel didn't take long and soon they were each settled in their room. Sirius had booked 4 guestrooms that were more than large enough for one person. The room was spacey and had a king-size bed with a little couch and bathroom that had a nice big shower and bathtub. When their suitcases were delivered they decided to go for a little walk in New York City. Hermione bought a tourist guide and together with Harry they marked down what they wanted to see. Sirius and Remus followed closely as they had never been in such a huge city before so they were too busy looking at all the Muggle things they saw.

Seeing that it was still quite early in the morning thanks to the time difference with Britain they stopped in a small coffee shop and discussed the plan for the coming week. Each day they would visit one of the things the kids had noted down as wanting to see. This afternoon they would visit Broadway since they were so close to it from the hotel. After enjoying some time off they walked to Broadway, where Hermione pointed out that many shows are being performed here and that it's a very famous place. When they reached Times Square Sirius, Remus and Harry were looking around with their jaws just about hitting the ground. Times Square was very famous for its bright commercials and Hermione explained them that at New Year, thousands of people come here and celebrate.

After spending the day in town they returned to the hotel to have a huge dinner seeing as they were all very hungry from the sightseeing they had done. Harry and Hermione then spend a few hours in the pool while Sirius and Remus relax in one of the many chairs on the poolside. Harry loved swimming and he had a great time fooling around with Hermione; they even met a few other kids around their

age and after they explained the rules to Harry they played a game of water polo.

The next morning all four of them were sitting at the breakfast table discussing what they were going to do that day. Sirius wanted to get the shopping done today so they had the rest of the week to just visit things without having to hurry. So today they would visit the magical part of town which could be found by entering a theater that only magical people could see. The theater actually worked like The Leaky Cauldron and gave access to 'Mage Street' where hundreds of stores could be found. It was a lot bigger than Diagon Alley as the Magical population in America was significantly larger than that of Britain.

When they passed the theater and entered the 'Mage Street' the group didn't know where to look first. There were dozens of bookstores, Apothecaries, Wandmakers and item shops that they wanted to visit so they asked around a bit so they could find the best ones. One man recommended them a few shops at the beginning of the 'Mage Street' that would have everything they needed. First stop was the Wandmaker as all of them needed a backup wand. When they entered the shop a young man came to the counter and asked them how he could help them.

"We're in need of backup wands." Sirius said.

"Ah tourists huh? If I had to guess you're from Britain?" The young man smiled.

"That's right. How did you know except the accent?" Remus wanted to know.

"We get a lot of foreigners here wanting to buy an extra wand." The man said. "Britain is known to have some strict rules about spare wands."

"So America doesn't have this rule?" Harry asked interested.

"That's right. In America everyone has the right to defend himself and to carry weapons." The young man explained. "This is both true for

the Muggles and Magicals. We don't bother with silly rules like 'one wand per wizard'."

"So everyone can just buy wands here?" Hermione asked.

"No, there are some rules and regulations we must follow." The man said explaining. "All weapons must be registered so they can be traced back to their owner in case of a crime."

"So you would have to register our wands as well?" Sirius said frowning.

"Not really; for an extra fee we forget that part with foreigners." The man said softly. "Now how about we get started?"

Remus and Sirius quickly found their match amongst the wands the young man gave them. Sirius' was a Mahogany wand with a core of Dragon's heartstring while Remus found a Yew wand with a Werewolf hair as a core. Harry and Hermione however proved to be tricky customers. They had tried over a few dozen wands and still hadn't found anything that would do as a backup wand. Finally they found something when the man took out his more expensive and rare wands.

Harry pulled out a wand made of one of the hardest woods in existence named Lignum Vitae with a dual core made out of an Ancient Griffin's heartstring and crystallized Basilisk's venom. Harry could feel that the wand was powerful and he immediately liked it. The man told him that the wand would be excellent for offensive and defensive magic.

Hermione also found her match with a wand made from Eucalyptus Marginata with a dual core of crystallized Phoenix Tears and an Ancient Dragon's heartstring. According to the man it would be very strong at healing and offensive magic.

The four paid for their wands with an extra for having them unregistered plus four wand holsters that were invisible and would make it impossible for enemies to summon the wand. The man was very happy with their purchases as those things didn't come cheap

but Harry didn't mind. To him, the fact that they had some extra security was all that mattered. An extra wand could make the difference between life and death after all.

After they left the Wandmaker they went to the largest bookstore Hermione had ever seen; she was ecstatic to see all those different kind of book and dragged Harry all over the place. Sirius and Remus laughed loudly but followed with a large cart knowing that the two would buy some books here. In no time the cart was half full and they still had to visit a part of the shop. Hermione and Harry bought some books on advanced Battle Magic, Transfiguration, Charms and Rituals that would give quite a bit of problems back home to buy or sell. Here however, nobody cared what books you bought as long as you didn't use the knowledge with bad intentions. If you got caught performing a Dark Ritual that required 7 virgins well, you paid the price. Just because you could buy the theory didn't mean you were free to do whatever you wanted.

Seeing that they would be hauling those books for the rest of the day Harry called Dobby and asked to put the books in the library. Dobby gladly accepted his task and 'popped' away with the books saying that if Harry Potter Sir needed anything all he had to do was call. Harry thanked the elf and joined the rest of the group so they could finish their shopping. Next stop was the Apothecary where they would look for some of the more rare ingredients. When they entered the typical smell that all apothecaries had hit them and they started looking. Harry and Hermione realized that if Snape was here he would be shocked at the ingredients available. In the end they called Dobby again to bring all the ingredients home and by the end of the day the four of them were very happy to be back at the hotel.

Over the next few days the four visited the Statue of Liberty which really made Sirius' and Remus' jaw drop. The Wizarding World didn't really have such monuments such as these they realized. It was a fascinating sight for the two Wizards. They also visited the New York Public Library which made Hermione very happy of course. If Sirius and Remus hadn't make her promise not to go crazy she would have spend the rest of the week inside the library. They also visited places like the Empire State Building and the Bronx Zoo which they all like

very much. Harry especially like the animals but still felt kind of sad to see them locked up.

The week went way too fast and now it was time to return home to England. They checked out of the hotel and called Dobby once they were sure to be alone. Dobby 'popped' them back to the Grangers who were waiting for them to return. Of course Hermione and Harry told them all about the things they'd seen and even Sirius and Remus were happily talking to Dan about the trip. It was about 11 pm when Harry, Sirius and Remus left the Grangers and once they were home they were so tired that they went straight for bed.

Nymphadora Tonks was a junior Auror just graduated from training and she was currently working with Kingsley Shacklebolt. To Nymphadora being an Auror had been her dream job ever since she was a little girl. When she was little her mum used to tell her about the war and how brave men and women fought You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters. She, like so many children loved the story about how Harry Potter had defeated the Dark Lord but unlike others she wasn't a crazy fangirl. No, somehow she understood the sacrifice Harry Potter had to pay to become the Boy-Who-Lived. She admired him because he had done something no other witch or wizard had managed to do in several years namely stopping the most terrible Dark Lord ever.

To her Harry Potter wasn't just a hero no he was an example; a goal she would like to achieve. She promised herself that she would become strong to defeat evil just like he did. So she worked hard throughout her years at Hogwarts even though she wasn't the model student you thought she might be. She was well known for help pulling pranks or cause mischief but her grades had always been near the top of the class. When she finally managed to enter the Auror Training Program she had been ecstatic and she went for it one hundred and ten percent. Her disappointment came fairly early in the program when they learned more about laws and theory than spell and magic training. She wasn't stupid enough to think that all that theory would help her against Death Eaters but when she had made

that comment her supervisor had said that Death Eaters were no longer around and that she didn't need to worry about that.

Throughout her 3 year training program she had learned a lot but it still wasn't enough; she wanted more because with what she learned here she wouldn't be able to truly fight and defeat anyone. Sure the occasional thug or thief wouldn't stand a chance against an Auror but Death Eaters were trained in using strong and Dark spells. Compared to them all she learned were kiddy spells. She hoped it would change later on in the training but unfortunately it didn't. Nonetheless she had worked so hard and wasn't about to give up just because things didn't exactly go her way. She decided to talk about it with her new partner.

"Hey, Mr. Shacklebolt can I ask you a question?" Tonks asked.

"Sure Tonks how can I help you? And there's no need to call me Mr. Shacklebolt; Kingsley or Shack is fine." Kingsley said trying to help his new charge.

"Well, I was wondering how we're going to fight Death Eater or someone like them with the kind of training we received?" Tonks said frustrated. "I mean, sure we learned a lot during training and while thugs and thieves might get overwhelmed by Aurors I doubt any Death Eater would as much as flinch."

"Though I don't like to admit it you're right Tonks." Shacklebolt said.

"Really? Oh, so how do we fight men like that?" Tonks said wanting to know more.

"Believe it or not but until the Wizengamot declares that we're at war, Aurors are nothing more than peacekeepers." Shacklebolt said. "When we're at war we can use the stronger Light spells to fight."

"So basically we're sitting ducks if the Wizengamot decides that the situation isn't serious enough?" Tonks said amazed.

"Don't let anyone hear you say that." Shacklebolt warned her.

"Did you fight the Death Eaters?" Tonks asked him.

"I did; at the time I was still a rookie but my partner was none other than Alastor Moody." Shacklebolt said. "Those were different times Tonks and I really hope you won't ever have to experience that."

Tonks and Shacklebolt walked through the halls of the Ministry of Magic talking about the war had been fought. Tonks was amazed at how You-Know-Who was winning the war and how the only one who could fight with him evenly was Dumbledore. She always thought the man was a bit of a weirdo with his funny colorful robes and weird manners but she knew the man was powerful. She asked Shacklebolt about Death Eater tactics and fighting styles but gaped when he told her that they mostly used hit and run attacks. Because the Aurors were forced to follow certain rules Death Eaters had more than time enough to disappear.

"What happened to Death Eaters that got caught?" Tonks asked.

"Most were questioned and sentenced but some of them got away by claiming that they were under the Imperious Curse." Shacklebolt shrugged.

"People like Malfoy." Tonks said hotly. She knew all too well how that family worked. Her mother was the sister of Lucius' wife; fortunately for Tonks her mother had eloped with her father resulting in her being disowned. Her mother had always said that marrying her father had been the best choice she had ever made.

"Careful Tonks; Malfoy has powerful friends in the Ministry and if you get on his bad side you'll regret it." Shacklebolt said warning her from Malfoy.

"I know but I just despise that man." Tonks said sighing. "I just don't get how a man like that gets that much power and leverage."

"It's all about the money Tonks." Shacklebolt told her. "If you got that you can do or get away almost with everything. However that doesn't mean that those people are completely outside of the law. There are situations where not even people like Malfoy could get out."

“Too bad he’s too good to get caught in such a situation.” Tonks said sadly.

“By the way, have you seen Sirius Black?” Shacklebolt asked her.

“Not yet but I have been invited to see him next weekend.” Tonks said happily. Ever since Sirius had been cleared from his crimes she had wanted to meet him; her mother had told her so much about the young Sirius that pulled pranks at Hogwarts together with his friends, The Marauders. He seemed to be a great guy and she was sure they would get along great.

“Let me tell you that when I heard about the mistakes that were made during his investigation, was the time I truly doubted the way things were going around here.” Shacklebolt whispered. “For years I’ve been proud to work as an Auror and I always tried to do the right thing but what Sirius Black has been through should never have happened.”

“I’ll be sure to tell him.” Tonks said before she left the building returning to her apartment where she had been living for the past 3 years. It wasn’t much but it was home; it had a one bedroom, a bathroom and a small kitchen that adjoined the living room. She left her parents because it became too troublesome when she came home and had to hear her parent’s protests towards her chosen profession. At first they thought she wouldn’t go through with it but once they saw she meant it they started having second thoughts about their daughter becoming an Auror. She understood her parents though, after all she was their only child and being an Auror wasn’t always safe. She took a quick shower before starting to make some dinner. After eating she read a bit and went to bed; tomorrow would be another gruesome day filled with training and paperwork.

And that’s a wrap. How was it? It was mostly some filler and introduction of Tonks. Next chapter things will speed up again and we’ll move forward with the story. So see you soon.

Chapter 32: Another one joins the Club

Harry was having the time of his life; he loved living with Sirius and Remus. They would always tell him about his parents and the things they had done during their time at Hogwarts. The two Marauders were also very cool with Harry and they didn't treat him like a kid. Instead they viewed him as a young adult who already had proven himself enough to them. That didn't mean however they didn't pull pranks on each other. Just that morning Sirius had switch Remus' shower gel with something that would give him a nice green glow. Remus had been mortified when he noticed the prank and demanded that Sirius undid his prank. Unfortunately for Remus the green look would remain for the rest of the day. Harry had told Remus that he made a poor Hulk which of course didn't make any sense to Sirius and Remus as they didn't know who or what the Hulk was.

The summer holidays reached its end as there were only three weeks left but Harry didn't mind. The summer had been great so he was satisfied. Today however Sirius would have company; he told Harry that he had a niece called Nymphadora Tonks who would be coming over. Harry wondered what had possessed a mother to call her child that but Sirius only found it funny. Harry had invited Hermione as well so they could get to know the woman. Over the last week Sirius had been telling them how Tonks would make a fine addition to their ranks. He told them that she was training to become an Auror so she was bound to know a lot of spells. He also said that it might be useful to have someone inside the Ministry that could tell them what was going on. Harry and Hermione agreed that someone like that would be very useful but they wanted to meet her in person first. They trusted Sirius and if he said that Tonks would be a great asset then they believed him. It didn't mean that they would just offer her to join them without meeting her however.

Remus was still trying to get rid of his green tint when Hermione arrived and she too made the Hulk comment. Remus muttered something about payback but the kids weren't too worried. While their pranks were sometimes a bit nasty they never crossed the line. All their pranks were easily reversed or were time related. It was all good

fun and Harry loved it even if he was the victim of the pranks every once in a while.

Just then Dobby announced that their guest had arrived outside so Sirius went outside so he could let Tonks know the secret. He had told her where to apparate but she hadn't been told the exact address. As he was the Secret Keeper only he could tell her the address. Tonks was confused, she had been given the coordinates to where she to apparate thinking it was a house but all she saw was trees and bushes. She looked around a bit longer but didn't see anything; she was starting to think she had been part of a prank but just then she heard a small 'pop' behind her. Her Auror instinct woke up and she turned around with her wand in her hand ready to start cursing.

"Oh there, no need to hex me." Sirius said hastily with his hands up.

"Sirius, is that you?" Tonks asked carefully.

"Of course it's me Nymphadora." Sirius laughed before he dodged a hex.

"Don't call me that. I hate that name." Tonks said loudly.

Sirius laughed once more before he explained that his house was under the Fidelius Charm and gave her a piece of paper with the address on it. As soon as she had read the address and memorized it Sirius destroyed the paper. Tonks then saw a large gate appear and followed Sirius inside; she knew how the Charm worked so she didn't have to ask anything about it. She looked at the property and whistled when she saw the huge house.

"Wow, that's a least fifty times my place." She breathed loudly.

"If you ever need a place to stay, you're always welcome." Sirius said smiling. "I have more than enough room with only me and Remus living here."

"Thanks for the offer." Tonks said gratefully.

When they entered the house Tonks was amazed at how nice the place was. She loved the interior and she marveled at the way Sirius had decorated his place. Little did she know that it was Harry and Hermione who had redecorated the place when they first came to visit the house. She followed Sirius into the living room and she immediately recognized one person.

"Everyone, meet NymARG" Sirius tried to introduce her but she wacked him on the arm. "I mean Tonks."

"Wotcher everyone." Tonks smiled.

"Yes well, this is Remus Lupin." Sirius said introducing his friend.

"Nice to meet you Remus." Tonks said. "Did you eat something bad or are you trying to create a new trend?" she joked.

"No, I fell victim to one of Sirius' pranks this morning." Remus smiled at the young woman.

"And these two are Harry and Hermione." Sirius said shoving Tonks towards the two teenagers.

"Nice to finally meet you both." Tonks said looking at the two and noticing the closeness between them.

"It's nice to meet you too Miss Tonks." Hermione said politely.

"Blimey, none of the Miss business please." Tonks said quickly. "I don't look that old do I? Maybe it's the hair?"

To the kids surprise Tonks brown hair changed into a very bright pink color. Tonks laughed at their faces and explained them that she was a Metamorphmagus and that she could change her appearance at will. Harry and Hermione had never heard of such a thing and they immediately started asking questions and Tonks was only too happy to answer by showing what she could do. Usually she didn't like to display her ability because of the fact that many saw her as source of entertainment but she felt like these two kids truly interested in her

powers. They didn't ask her questions so they could laugh and have fun they were genuinely interested.

"Why don't we go outside and talk on the terrace?" Sirius proposed.

"So Tonks, Sirius told us you're an Auror." Remus asked her.

"Well, actually I'm just a junior Auror at the moment." Tonks admitted. "I only just completed the training program. I started working with Kingsley Shacklebolt a few weeks ago."

"Ah Kingsley, I met him when I was talking to Amelia Bones about my innocence." Sirius interjected. "Nice guy and seems to know his business."

"That reminds me, he asked me to pass his regards to you." Tonks nodded.

"So what is Auror training like?" Harry asked her.

"Euhm, how to say this?" Tonks said with a frown. "It's actually very boring and not all that great. The first part is purely theory about laws and what not. The second part is actual spell training and even that's not what I expected it to be."

"How so?" Hermione asked.

"It's just that I joined to Aurors to fight people like Death Eaters and the only thing we are trained for is dealing with thugs and small time criminals." Tonks sighed. "Honestly I'm a bit disappointed in what an Auror truly is."

"That's because it peaceful now so you're not trained to fight Dark Lords and his minions." Sirius nodded. "When Voldemort was around Aurors received crash courses in fighting his Death Eaters but unfortunately by then it was too late."

"Exactly, what's the point in giving those courses then?" Tonks agreed loudly. "I talked to Shack about that as well and even he admitted it was a stupid idea."

“So why keep being an Auror?” Remus asked carefully.

“Being an Auror has been my dream since I was a little girl.” Tonks said looking at Harry. “Don’t get this the wrong way Harry but you’re the reason I wanted to become one.”

“Me? But we never met before.” Harry said surprised.

“When I was little you were my role model.” Tonks laughed. “I wanted to become strong like you and fight the bad guys so I could save everyone. Of course I know that you didn’t ask to be the Boy-Who-Lived but you were my goal.”

“Strong as me huh?” Harry said softly. “Trust me Tonks I’m nothing without my friends. I know the Wizarding World has the image of me as being the strong savior who defeated Voldemort but actually I’m scared to death of fighting him again. If I could I would rather be a normal Wizard who never would have to deal with him.”

“I understand.” Tonks said. “I’m sorry if I offended you.”

“Oh no you didn’t.” Harry said quickly. “I just don’t want you to think I’m this superhero who defeats Dark Lords in his spare time.”

“Let’s change to a more joyful subject.” Sirius said before everyone became depressed talking about things like Voldemort.

They all eagerly agreed and for a few hours they laughed as Sirius and Remus told them about some of the pranks they had done on Snape while they were at school. Tonks laughed so hard her sides hurt as she too had a big dislike of the greasy git. She then told about her years at Hogwarts and how she was sorted in Hufflepuff and she told them much she enjoyed her years there. Then it was Harry’s and Hermione’s turn to tell about their adventures at Hogwarts.

“Hold on a minute.” Tonks said when Harry and Hermione finished talking. “You’re telling me that the two you saved the Philosopher Stone from You-Know-Who? And you fought him again in your

second year and killed a thousand year old basilisk? Not to mention a memory of a younger version of You-Know-Who?"

"Yep, that's exactly what we're telling you." Harry said calmly.

"And you're sure he's still alive and out there?" Tonks asked alarmed.

"Not only is he still alive but he's also looking for a way to get back so he can continue what he started all those years ago." Sirius said gravely.

"Blimey, but why isn't the Ministry looking for him then?" Tonks asked in a small panic.

"That's because they don't want to face the truth." Remus said. "Dumbledore told the Minister that it's likely that Voldemort is still out there but he doesn't believe him. He refuses to accept even the slightest possibility that Voldemort might come back."

"So what are we going to do?" Tonks yelled. "We can't just sit here and wait for him to come back."

"There's not much we can do, Tonks." Harry said. He liked the girl and knew she could be a good asset to their group but he wanted to get to know her a little bit before he asked her to join them. Sirius had told him that he was sure that Tonks could be trusted and she would be willing to join them. "We can't announce all of this or it would result in either a total panic or we would be declared insane or troublemakers."

Tonks said down breathing heavily from the things she had heard over the past half hour. Hearing that the most powerful Dark Lord was still alive and trying to come back had been a huge shock to her. Not once did she think that they were playing a prank on her; she knew when people were serious and they weren't kidding. She felt an immediate trust in Harry and she knew that if he said that Voldemort was still out there then he was.

"Alright, if V-Voldemort is still out there then I'm going to train as hard as I can to get stronger." Tonks managed to say. "I'll make sure I'm

strong enough to face him and his Death Eaters by the time he gets back.”

This statement was heard by Harry and the rest and they all smiled. With that one statement she had gained the trust of all of them and they all nodded to each other. The fact that she had pronounced the word ‘Voldemort’ earned her bonus points with Harry. He stood up from where he was sitting and walked over to Tonks who was still talking to herself. He gently placed his hand on her shoulder so he wouldn’t scare her. When she looked up and saw Harry stand there she felt a small blush appear on her face and stared at Harry.

“Tonks, what would you do if there was a group out there that is training specifically to defeat Voldemort?” Harry asked her.

“I would ask them where I sign to join them.” Tonks said without hesitating.

“Dobby.” Harry called of the little house-elf who instantly appeared next to him. “Can you ‘pop’ us all to my place?”

Later that night Tonks sat in her room at Sirius’ place thinking about what she had learned that day. To say she was impressed, scared and shocked would be an understatement. First she learned that the strongest and cruelest Dark Lord in the past few centuries was still alive and kicking, searching for a way to get back to his former glory. Then Harry had dropped the biggest bombshell of them all on her; he had told her about what he had been doing over the past three years to prepare for Voldemort’s return and frankly she felt like an idiot.

Here was a young fourteen year old boy, no not a boy she thought. Harry wasn’t a boy; he was a young man who had shouldered the immense task of defeating Voldemort. She was blown away when she heard what he had done so far. Some of the things she had been scared of like when he mentioned the rituals they had done but she relaxed when he explained his reasoning and to her surprise she felt that he was right. When all was said and done she had sworn a Magical Oath to help him defeat Voldemort and never to betray him or his friends.

That she had made an Oath like that scared her even more; she didn't know what had come over her but she knew it was the right thing to do. Harry seemed to radiate a power that was both reassuring her and making her follow him. She understood that Harry would be the one that would lead them to victory in the upcoming war; it wouldn't be the Ministry or Dumbledore this time. No, she was sure that Harry would be the one to save them once more and this time she would be at his side.

When they came back to Sirius' place Tonks had pulled Hermione on the side for a girl talk. They had become friends in no time and she truly like the girl. She was smart and curious yet she was friendly and not at all bossy or showing off. The two girls had talked about just anything and of course that included boys. Hermione had then blushing admitted that she and Harry were together and Tonks was squealing with delight at the news. She thought they were very cute together and she asked Hermione all sort of questions.

Harry was something else Tonks had trouble believing; he was unlike anything she had expected. Contrary to what she had thought Harry was very humble and down to earth and he had impressed her with his gentlemen like behavior. When he had place his hand on her shoulder she had felt a slight jolt and when she looked at him she felt herself blush. She cursed at her stupidity and forced herself not to start blushing again. She just couldn't help it but at that exact moment she was slightly jealous of Hermione. Harry definitely was a great guy and she was sure he would turn out to be a great boyfriend for the lucky girl.

The next morning she woke up in an unfamiliar room and for a second she panicked before remembering where she was. She sighed relieved that everything was okay and quickly grabbed her clothes before going to the bathroom. She gasped at seeing the luxurious bath and shower and promptly told herself that she was going to enjoy this. She filled the bath with hot water and used one of the scented soaps she had found in the closets. She took of her underwear and slowly slid inside the tub enjoying the hot water on her skin. She wished she had such a wonderful bathroom at her apartment and almost decided that she would take Sirius' offer on

living with him. After her soak she got dressed and went downstairs feeling very good and happy.

“Good morning Tonks.” Harry said when she entered the kitchen.

“Oh hey Harry; where is everyone else.” Tonks said smiling.

“Hermione went home for the night and Sirius and Remus prefer to sleep in on the weekends.” Harry told her. “Want some breakfast?”

“Sure do; you can cook too?” Tonks asked surprised.

“Dobby only allows me to cook breakfast on the weekends.” Harry laughed nodding. “But I enjoy cooking for my friends and family.”

“Thank you Harry, for including me.” Tonks said smiling. “That means a lot to me.”

“Well, get used to it Tonks.” Harry said gently. “You’re one of us now and that makes you family.”

Harry and Tonks spend breakfast talking about school and some lighter subjects instead of discussing the group. They had a great laugh when Sirius came down transfigured into a half man half dog courtesy of Remus. Sirius had two big dog ears and his tongue was hanging out as well. Harry almost lost it when he saw the tail that Sirius sported through his pants. When Remus came down and admired his work they all had a great laugh and Harry took several pictures of Sirius. Harry had made a Wizarding photo album so he could keep the photos separated from the album Dan and Emma had given him on his birthday two years ago.

“I’m telling you Sirius.” Remus laughed. “You’re your own best friend.”

“Very funny Moony.” Sirius said trying to look mad but even he could see the humor in it.

“So what’s on the program today?” Remus then asked Harry.

“Well, I was thinking that Tonks here could do the sleep-reducing ritual today and start reinforcing her Occlumency.” Harry said turning to her.

“Sure thing Harry but only if you help me because I’m really clumsy at that kind of stuff.” Tonks admitted. She had always been a bit of a klutz when it came to that sort of things.

“Don’t worry about it. Hermione and I will take good care of you.” Harry said nodding.

Over the next few weeks Tonks was introduced to how Harry and the group worked; she was now familiarized with how they thought about Magic. At first she had some trouble accepting that they had performed rituals but after Harry and Hermione had told her their views she had reluctantly agreed to do the rituals as well. She had to admit that they had merit. She especially liked the Sleep-Reducing ritual. She always had trouble staying awake during night shifts even if she took a nap in the afternoon.

She had laughed loudly when she saw that Harry and Hermione were able to do magic because Dobby had cast a spell at them. It was foolproof because none of those Pureblooded fools at the Ministry would think about such a solution. To them a house-elf was a servant nothing more and none of them would stoop so low as to let an elf use his magic on them. When she wasn’t on duty at the Ministry she could be found at Sirius’ place helping with Harry and Hermione. She had found some real good friends in both of them she realized.

Right now however she was relaxing in one of the chair alongside the pool. It was a sunny day and she had managed to convince the rest of the gang that today was a day off. She wanted to have some fun and just relax after the past few days. She had bought a nice new bikini that was kind of small but it still covered everything enough so that it wasn’t too revealing. She loved to relax in the sun working on her tan a little bit; she wasn’t one of those girls who paid much attention to her appearance but she liked to look nice. Currently she wasn’t wearing her top as she didn’t want tan lines on her chest but she had cast a Perimeter Ward around her and someone had just

triggered it so she quickly put it back on. She saw Harry arrive in his swimming trunks with a t-shirt on and she wondered if he was still a bit shy around her.

“Hi there hot stuff, what’s with the t-shirt?” Tonks asked.

“Hi Tonks, how’s the water.” Harry said while taking off his t-shirt but he refused to look at her for some reason.

“Harry, is something wrong?” Tonks asked concerned. “Why aren’t you looking at me?”

“Well, it just that your bikini is kind of small.” Harry said with a red face.

“Oh, does it bother you?” Tonks said smiling. This was one of the qualities she liked about Harry. “I can put on another one if it makes you uncomfortable.”

“No, it doesn’t bother me.” Harry said quickly. “It’s just that I wouldn’t want you to think that I’m a pervert or something like that.”

“Harry, it’s ok to look. I don’t mind as long as you don’t undress me with your eyes.” Tonks said laughing.

“I wouldn’t do such a thing Tonks I swear.” Harry said not wanting her to think that.

“Relax Harry, Its fine.” Tonks smiled at him. “Now why don’t you start doing your laps and we’ll talk later.”

Harry quickly nodded and ran to the other side of the pool before jumping in. He loved swimming and he always enjoyed just doing laps until he couldn’t swim no more. Tonks was looking at him before she turned to the bushes behind her and said that it was okay to come out. She had felt someone enter her Perimeter Ward around the time when she and Harry started talking but the person never arrived so she guessed he or she was waiting to come out. She smiled as Hermione came out of the bushes with a bright red face.

"You're so busted, Hermione." Tonks laughed. "Why were you hiding? Are you shy to show Harry your bikini?"

"No, Harry already saw me wearing one." Hermione said shaking her head.

"So what's wrong?" Tonks wanted to know.

"It's just that I saw you and Harry talking and you're so beautiful." Hermione sighed loudly. "I can't compete with someone like you."

"Compete? Hermione, why do you think that you have to compete with me?" Tonks wondered. "And FYI, I think you're very beautiful as well."

"Thanks Tonks but we both know that's not true." Hermione said sadly. She was surprised however when Tonks hit her on the head with her book looking very mad.

"Now you listen to me Hermione Jane Granger." Tonks hissed making Hermione wince at that tone. "If I hear you say something like that one more time than I'm going to hex you. What on earth makes you think you're not pretty?"

"Look at me Tonks. I have bushy hair and large front teeth; I have no butt and my breasts are hardly developed." Hermione said hotly.

"Okay my first question to you is this." Tonks said. "Do you really think Harry cares about any of this? Or do you know that he loves you for who you are?"

"Of course Harry loves me but that might change when he meets girls like you." Hermione answered.

"Honestly Hermione, you're such an idiot." Tonks said while giving the younger girl a big hug. "If you're worried about your body then let me tell you a secret. My body only started to take shape when I was in my Sixth or Seventh year. Don't let anyone tell you you're not beautiful Hermione; have you looked at your mum? She's gorgeous

and you look just like her; there's no doubt in my mind you'll be just like her."

"Do you really think so?" Hermione asked with a small smile.

"You bet I do." Tonks said. "And I know Harry is crazy about you. I can see it when he looks at you."

"Thanks Tonks." Hermione said hugging the older girl. "I'm sorry if I was a bit jealous of you."

"You were jealous of me? Why?" Tonks asked. "Was it because Harry was looking at me?"

"I was scared that he might like you more than he liked me." Hermione admitted.

"Silly girl, you know just as I do that Harry isn't the kind of guy to do such a thing." Tonks said smiling. "Harry loves you because you're his best friend and you're someone he can trust completely. Plus there's the fact that he thinks you're smoking hot."

"Does he really think that?" Hermione giggled a bit.

"Hermione, you have nothing to worry about." Tonks honestly said. "I'll never do something that might cause you pain. I admit that I think that Harry is a great catch and if he was single I wouldn't mind getting to know him better but as long as you're around I'll never act on it. Besides, he's a bit too young for me at the moment."

"So you like Harry?" Hermione asked alarmed.

"I like Harry but as a friend; nothing more." Tonks said quickly. "Besides I'm not looking for a relationship right now. I just broke up with my girlfriend not so long ago."

"Girlfriend? You like girls?" Hermione asked shocked.

"I like both men and women though I prefer men." Tonks shrugged. She wasn't ashamed of the fact she was bi-sexual; in the beginning

she was scared of how people would think about her but now she was used to it and didn't care about it. "Does that bother you?"

"No, not at all." Hermione said smiling. "On the contrary, I find it very interesting. I have never met someone who's bi-sexual before."

"Do you have any questions?" Tonks said knowing that Hermione was very curious of nature.

The two girls talked a bit about both men and women and Hermione had to admit that Tonks was very open about the subject. Tonks told her about how she had figured out that she liked girls in her fourth year when she fell in love with one of her classmates. Tonks also told her that while the Muggle World was starting to get more open about these kinds of things, the Wizarding World was fiercely against it. She thought it was very hypocrite about Wizarding society since things like having a mistress was widely accepted. Tonks noticed that Hermione had started frowning halfway through the conversation so when she was done talking she asked what she was thinking about.

"It's just that I think you're beautiful and that you're really great." Hermione said shyly. "Does this mean I'm bi-sexual as well?"

"Of course not." Tonks smiled reassuringly. "Just because you think someone is beautiful or like the person doesn't mean you're in love with someone. If that were true than everyone would be bi-sexual."

"Oh okay." Hermione said smiling.

"Just remember you can always come to me if you have questions or doubts." Tonks said. "I know that it gets confusing sometimes and talking about with someone might help. It sure helped me when I talked about it."

"Thanks Tonks, you're the best." Hermione said before she hugged the girl and joined Harry in the pool.

Well, Tonks has joined the gang. I still haven't decided if I want to make this a purely Harry/Hermione story or a Harry/Hermione/Tonks story. While I thinks it's a great pairing, I don't want to resort to the

usual cliché usage of soulbonds and the likes. Don't get me wrong I like those stories but I don't want to use that storyline. Maybe I'll keep this purely H/HR and after this story is done, I might do a Honks story.

About Tonks' sexual preference, it's something I came up with in case I decided to make it a H/HHR/NT pairing after all. Also, Hermione's question about being bi-sexual is just curiosity. Forteen is difficult age for most of us and Hermione has reached that age where she started to develop those kind of feelings. I'm sure a lot of us have been confused about sex and love at that age.

Anyway, let me know how you felt about the chapter and see you soon.

Chapter 33: Of fashion and Quidditch

Summer was reaching its end and the group was still working hard at their preparations. Currently Harry was designing the outfit he wanted his friends to wear when they fought Voldemort and his Death Eaters. He had the overall design ready and he was very pleased with it; it was stylish, practical and would protect them from being recognized although he had no doubt he himself would be found out early in the game. That didn't matter to him as he was already considered the Boy-Who-Lived and a target for Voldemort and his cronies. His friends and family however needed to stay anonymous for as long as possible. Voldemort wouldn't hesitate to attack their families in retaliation if he recognized one of them.

The plan was to use the hide they had poached of the basilisk as that was highly magic-resistant. It would protect them almost just as good as Dragon hide but this gave Harry a problem as well. He needed to charm the clothes and because of its magic-resistant qualities the basilisk hide wouldn't allow that. So he had come up with a solution; he would fabricate the clothes in several layers. The first inner layer would be a normal everyday fabric that was easy enough to charm. The second layer would be the Basilisk hide that would protect them from Magical damage and the third and last layer would be made of a Muggle fabric called Kevlar. This would protect them from more physical harm than magical damage.

Tonight Harry and Dobby would go and acquire the necessary materials to make the outer layer of the battle-robies. Harry had looked up the necessary information and had found the location of a Muggle factory that processed the finished material into the vests that police officers and soldiers used in the field. That was exactly what Harry wanted as he didn't want to make just a vest that covered the chest; he wanted to make an entire outfit in the material. If he got enough material that wouldn't be a problem; getting into the factory wouldn't be such a problem thanks to Dobby and his invisibility cloak.

"Dobby, are you ready?" Harry asked the elf.

“Dobby is ready Harry Potter sir.” Dobby nodded. Harry smiled and put his cloak on; he placed his hand on Dobby’s shoulder and let the elf ‘pop’ them into the factory.

With a barely audible sound they arrived and Harry was thanking his father for supplying him with his cloak. Currently they were inside the work area and several people were busy with their appointed jobs. Harry took some time to admire how everything worked as he didn’t know anything about it. He watched as the workers put several layers of fabric on each other, and then cut out the design before stitching it together. After that he started focusing on finding the storage area. He followed one of the workers and about a half hour later he found himself outside a huge warehouse that was guarded by several men armed with weapons. It didn’t matter since they couldn’t see or hear him; he waited for another half hour and asked Dobby if he could ‘pop’ them inside which Dobby promptly did.

Harry looked at the huge rolls of different fabrics and quickly instructed Dobby to ‘pop’ several of each roll over to his place. One of each roll of fabric would be enough to make a dozen uniforms but he wanted to make sure that he wouldn’t have to come back anymore. So he and Dobby took ten rolls of everything before disappearing again. Hopefully the theft would remain unknown until the next day but he wasn’t worried at all. Nobody had even known he was there and he hadn’t let any traces of him being here either. Even if there was Muggle security like cameras they wouldn’t show anything since they would be destroyed by Dobby using magic.

“Good job, Dobby.” Harry said smiling.

“Dobby is glad Harry Potter Sir is happy.” Dobby happily nodded.

“Let’s see if we can make a prototype of the robes.” Harry said and Dobby levitated the rolls of fabric and unrolled it so Harry could draw the design before cutting it.

Together with Dobby who was surprisingly good at sewing and stitching clothes Harry managed to cut and sew a test version of the uniform. There was a long cloak that resembled a Muggle raincoat that went to about the height of the knees. It had long sleeves and

could be buttoned up from the waist to the neck. He had also provided a hood that covered his entire head. Luckily for Harry he had Dobby's help since the fabric wasn't that easy to cut and sew without magical means. He looked at the mirror and was satisfied with the design; it looked good and was fairly comfortable to wear as well. It was a bit heavy but nothing that a Light-Weight Charm couldn't help.

Then he had a pants made out of the material as well; it would protect his legs from any damage. He would sew the Basilisk Hide and the normal clothes inside later on. His chest would be protected by the cloak and the other layers as well. Harry feared that the outfit might become a bit thick with all the layers but in the end protection came first. Besides the two other layers weren't that thick anyway; satisfied he nodded and put the cloak and pants on the side. For now he had done enough and it was almost breakfast time anyway. He would continue working on it later on.

Augusta Longbottom was baffled at the changes her grandson had undergone over the past year. Though it shamed her to admit she had always been a bit disappointed in Neville; he was nothing like his parents used to be in her eyes. Her son Frank was strong and tall, he was a fine Wizard that knew what he wanted and he wasn't afraid to work hard for it. Her daughter in law Alice was gentler in her ways but once she had made up her mind there was no stopping her. Neville on the other hand was shy and didn't show any strong talent in magic much to her dismay. Neville was the heir to the Noble house of Longbottom yet he wasn't anything like the heir she expected him to be.

She had always pushed him to be more like his father but nothing seemed to work. Neville preferred working in his green house and cultivating plants and while that was a worthwhile and suitable hobby, it wasn't something an heir should occupy himself with. No matter how much she tried to instruct him in the Pureblood traditions Neville didn't seem to care. This angered her greatly; she didn't believe in that Pureblood crap You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters sprouted but to her traditions were something that needed to be conserved and practiced. Over the years she had accepted that Neville would never

be his father and resigned to that fact. While she wished Neville would see reason she also loved her grandson very much even if she was at times very strict with him.

However over the past year something seemed to have changed in her grandson. She had first noticed it when she saw him at Christmas last year; Neville walked straight and with much more confidence and that had pleased her very much. She started to hope that Neville would come into his own and she backed off a bit so she wouldn't scare off the confidence. During the Christmas holidays Neville told her that he had made two wonderful friends in Harry and Hermione and this shocked her. Her grandson was friends with Harry Potter? When had this happened? When she asked about it he told her that they had been studying together and that they helped him when he had trouble. Obviously the two kids did a great job at helping him if he was this enthusiastic about it.

The real shocker came when she received a notice from Prof. McGonagall that Neville had punched Draco Malfoy in the face which resulted in a broken nose. While normally she was against violence Augusta couldn't help but beam with pride when she read that Neville had fought because Malfoy had insulted his parents. She had never been more proud of him as on that moment; she knew how sensitive the condition of Frank and Alice were to Neville and that someone like him had fought to protect their honor was amazing. Neville had also written her a letter explaining the situation and saying that he would accept any punishment she deemed necessary but that he wouldn't let anyone talk bad about his parent like that any longer. She had answered him that she would never punish him for defending his parent's name and that she was proud of him.

Thinking of Neville she looked outside and saw him running laps around the estate. This was also something that had changed her views on her grandson; apparently he had been practicing with Harry and Hermione and it did him loads of good. No longer was he on the tubby side but after months of repeated training he had changed into a tall and lean young man. More and more she saw Frank emerge from inside Neville though he still had his mother's kindness and gentle attitude. She saw that a familiar white owl landed next to Neville and she smiled when she saw Neville's face lit up when he

took the letter from Hedwig. Over the past weeks Hedwig had been delivering letters from Harry every few days and it always brightened his day.

“Another letter from Harry?” She asked when Neville stormed into the house so he could reply.

“Harry really is a great friend.” Neville nodded. “He and Hermione have written quite often this summer.”

“Does Harry like Quidditch?” Augusta asked curiously.

“Well, he always supports the team but he doesn’t play although he’s really good on a broom.” Neville said after thinking a bit. “Why do you ask?”

“You know that since I’m a member of the Wizengamot I have several privileges right?” She said. “Well, in two weeks the World Championship Quidditch will be held here in Britain and I have several places available to donate to people I want. Why don’t you ask Harry if he and his family would like to join us there?”

“Really? That would be great. Thank you so much.” Neville said before hugging his grandmother tightly.

“You’re welcome Neville. Tell him I have six places available for him and his family.” Augusta said smiling.

“I’ll go write him right away.” Neville said shouting from halfway the stairs.

Hermione had just arrived at Harry’s place thanks to the ‘Dobby Express’ like she did every morning. She got up at around 7am, showered and kissed her mum and dad wishing them a nice day before she called Dobby and ‘popped’ away. When she would arrive at Harry’s she would complete their training schedule with Harry and then eat a lovely breakfast prepared by Dobby. It had been a routine for weeks now and she liked it. Now that she didn’t have to hide anything from her parents she felt so much better about everything.

This was one of the reasons she was very happy right now; the other was her relationship with Harry.

They had been together for almost 2 months now and things were going great; she loved spending time with Harry as a couple. She absolute loved holding him and cuddling with him; not to mention the kisses they shared. They had made a pact however not to cross a certain line until both of them were of the legal age of sixteen. Neither of them was in a hurry and while they were sure that at moments it would be difficult to resist they counted on the other to stop them from going too far. Over the past few weeks Hermione had been feeling more feminine than ever; she loved how Harry could make her feel so beautiful and wanted. Ever since her talk with Tonks at the poolside she had been trying to be less negative about her own appearance and she had to admit that she felt much better.

Tonks was another reason Hermione felt so happy lately. Ever since she was little Hermione had loved books and studying; it was who she was. She was a smart girl with a passion for learning that not many people could share and most definitely not the other kids in her class. To them she had always been the teacher's pet, the bookworm or the girl to go to when you needed help with your homework. She had already accepted that it would be the same at Hogwarts but Harry proved her wrong. Still, Harry was a boy and sometimes she wanted to talk to a girl but even at Hogwarts she had trouble connecting with the girls in her dorm or class. They were friendly and all but none of them were really friends with her. Tonks however had immediately accepted Hermione as her friend and the two of them had great time discussing all kinds of things. Hermione had been amazed at how smart and caring Tonks really was; the young Auror was much more than a lovely package.

When she didn't find Harry in the gym she went to the house and looked around in search for her boyfriend. She couldn't find him in his room, the kitchen, the living room or anywhere. The last place she thought of looking was the potion lab so she went down to the basement. She only had to descend the stairs halfway before she could hear him talking to himself. She silently looked around and saw him walking around deep in thought about something. She waited for

a few minutes just observing him; she loved watching him when he was thinking. She thought he was so cute with his face in a frown and how he discussed his options out loud with himself.

“What’re you working on?” Hermione said announcing her presence making Harry turn around abruptly.

“Jesus ‘Mione, don’t scare me like that.” Harry said still shaking from the scare he had gotten.

“I’m sorry.” She giggled before kissing him. “You were so deep in thought that I couldn’t resist it.”

“You’ll pay for that Miss Granger.” Harry said before he started to tickle her sides making her laugh loudly while she tried to get away from him. They chased each other for about five minutes before they stopped both breathing deeply from laughing and running around. They sat down and Harry grabbed her in his arms sitting behind her making Hermione lean against his chest with her back. They stayed like that for a moment just enjoying the feeling.

“So, what are you working on?” Hermione asked him.

“I’m trying to come up with a decent battle-robe for when we start fighting.” Harry said explaining what he had done the previous night. Hermione was amazed at how far Harry thought ahead and how he always thought about their safety first. She asked him if she could help and Harry gladly accepted her help; he asked her if she could cut out the shape of the robes out of the fabric that would be the inner layer which she gladly did.

Meanwhile Harry was cutting the Basilisk Hide, careful not to make a mistake so he wouldn’t waste any. Contrary to the Kevlar he had acquired they only had a limited supply of Basilisk Hide so he had to be careful. With Dobby’s help he managed to sew the Hide and the Kevlar layer together; Dobby had used some House-elf spells to make very strong stitches making it very durable. He was about done when Hermione called out that she was done as well.

“Great job ‘Mione.” Harry said impressed. “Now all we need to do is charm that layer with the necessary charms.”

“What kind of charms do you have in mind?” Hermione asked him curiously.

“Well, I thought it might be useful to use a temperature regulating charm, a feather-weight charm and an obscuring charm for the hood.” Harry said listing his choice. “Do you have any ideas?”

“Let’s see.” Hermione said before she started thinking. “I think you have listed the more important ones. If necessary we can always add them later on.”

Harry nodded and they cast the spells which didn’t give them much trouble since they were mostly standard spells. When they finished Harry let Hermione do the honors by wearing the battle-robcs for the first time. She put on the cloak ignoring the pants that came along with it and looked at her reflection in the mirror. It was comfortable and she looked very impressive and intimidating in her opinion. The fact that her face was obscured thanks to the charm made it even more frightening and she liked it.

“It looks great, doesn’t it?” Hermione said turning to Harry.

“It sure does but it still misses something.” Harry said with a small frown. “We need a symbol for our group. I mean, Voldemort has his Dark mark and the Order of the Phoenix has said bird as symbol.”

“That’s actually a good point because we need people to know we’re the good guys.” Hermione nodded. “Any ideas?”

“Nope; I’ll leave that to you if you want?” Harry said smiling.

“I’ll find something that might work.” Hermione nodded. “But now we need to get breakfast and do our routine.”

Later that day Harry received Neville’s letter with the invitation to join him and his grandma at the Quidditch World Championship. Harry thought it was a great idea and even Hermione admitted that it might

be fun to watch a championship game so they quickly went to see Sirius and Remus and asked how they felt about it. Sirius of course saw this as a way to spend some quality time with Harry and Hermione and eagerly accepted and Remus said he would come as well if only to keep Sirius in line. Since Neville told him that he could invite up to six people they would ask Tonks as well since she was now part of their gang. Remus did however remark that Tonks could possibly be ordered to work that night to keep everything from getting out of line. Traditionally a lot of people got drunk at such events and do stupid things that would seem suspicious to the Muggles.

Harry wrote back to Neville saying that they gladly accepted the invitation and that they would be with four people and possibly a fifth and asked if he could keep those places available for him. He also wrote glad he was that Neville had invited him and how much he looked forward to seeing him.

The followings days went very fast and after they had gone to Diagon Alley to get their school books and necessary equipment the day of the Quidditch World Championship arrived. The championship was 2 days before the start of school so Hermione had already said goodbye to her parents and would be spending the last day of the vacation at Sirius' place with Harry. Dan and Emma didn't mind since Hermione had done an extra effort to spend some time with them over the past month. She had actually reconnected with her parent greatly thanks to the fact that they could visit Harry's place where they could see their daughter perform magic.

"Come on Remus, we're going to be late." Sirius said whining. He had actually been the one who was the most excited of all.

"Relax Padfoot; there's plenty of time left." Hermione said trying to calm the man down a bit.

"But Paws you don't understand." Sirius whined even more. "I heard that there would be Veelas."

"You and your libido." Remus joked. "Do you honestly think a Veela would be interested in you?"

“Hey, who wouldn’t want a piece of this?” Sirius said running his hand over his body trying to do a sexy pose.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I rest my case.” Remus said making both Harry and Hermione laugh while Sirius just pouted.

After Hermione had reassured Sirius that he still looked great and many women would still want him they finally left for the campsite where the Ministry had build the stadium. Sirius and Remus took the kids by sidealong-apparation as they had been given the coordinates by Neville in his last mail. When they arrived they saw nothing but chaos; they were standing in a huge open plain filled with people waiting to get inside the campsite. Thankfully, thanks to Neville’s grandmother their group had received special seats and with that came special treatment as well. One of those perks was that they didn’t have to get in line like all those people here. Now if only they could find Tonks and Neville everything would be perfect.

Fortunately one of those two was easy enough to spot with her bright pink hair. Remus was the one who saw her first and he quickly called her over. After greeting each other they went in search for Neville and found him waiting at the entrance for them.

“Hey Neville, thanks for waiting.” Harry said before clapping the young man on his shoulder.

“No problem Harry; let’s get inside and then we can introduce each other.” Neville smiled at his famous friend.

The group nodded and followed Neville to where his grandmother was waiting. They passed the ticket control without problem seeing as everyone recognized Augusta Longbottom, Harry Potter and Sirius Black. They were led to a seating area for the VIPs where there were refreshments and appetizers. The actual match wouldn’t start for quite a few hours but already some people were partying like their team had won.

Neville and Harry both took turn to introduce their friends and family; the first few conversations were highly formal as Sirius Black was the

head of House of the Most Noble House of Black just like Augusta Longbottom was the head of the Noble House of Longbottom. There were certain greetings and procedures they had to follow but once those were over the conversations got much more pleasant and soon everyone was feeling comfortable with each other.

“So Miss Tonks, you’re an Auror.” Neville said with admiration.

“Cor Blimey, not you too Neville?” Tonks groaned. “It’s just Tonks, none of that Miss bollocks.”

“Sorry Tonks.” Neville said with a blush. He had to admit that this young woman was very pretty and she actually talked to him.

“No need to apologize, Neville.” She smiled at him. “But to answer your question, I’m a Junior Auror for the moment. I just finished training a few months ago.”

The four talked while enjoying the atmosphere and laughed at the drunken idiots who tried to impress some of the girls and women only to be shot down mercilessly. One guy even managed to enrage one of the girls that badly that she kicked him right in the family jewels instantly dropping him on his knees before laying down in a fetal position from the pain. Both Neville and Harry pitied the guy but that would teach him to fondle a girl he didn’t even know. Of course all good things came to an end when a certain blonde Slytherin and his family arrived as well.

“Oh no, it’s Potty and his gang.” Draco said loudly. “Thank god that I don’t have to share seats at the Ministers private box with you.”

“Hello Malfoy, always a pleasure.” Harry sarcastically said.

“Still with those losers Potty?” Malfoy smirked. “Fatbottom and Granger are really bad for your reputation, when will you learn that?” Draco laughed loudly but failed to notice that he had drawn some attention to himself and not in the good way. Most of the adults had heard what Draco had said and Lucius cursed at his son’s stupidity.

“Lord Malfoy, I sure hope that your son is aware that insulting the future heir to the Noble House of Longbottom in presence of its current Head of House isn’t a smart thing to do.” Augusta said glaring at Draco who suddenly seemed to realize that he had made a mistake.

“Also insulting the godson and personal friends and family of the current Head of House of the Most Noble House of Black in his presence could have some serious consequences.” Sirius added quickly.

“Lady Longbottom, Lord Black I apologize for my son’s lack of insight and common sense.” Lucius said while glaring at Draco who gulped even more. “I assure you he’ll be educated in these matters as soon as we get home. Draco, you will make a formal apology this moment.” Draco was about to protest but one look from his parents told him that they meant business and that he better do as he was told or else.

“My Lady Longbottom, My Lord Black I would like to apologize for my behavior towards your wards and guests. It was unworthy of me and my family.” Draco said hating every word of it but he knew he had no choice.

“Very well, Mr. Malfoy apology accepted.” Augusta and Sirius said nodding although both of them knew that the young man didn’t actually mean a word of what he said. They were pleased however that he had to do it in front of a lot of families with lots of influence. It was a humiliation to the Malfoy’s and one that they wouldn’t forget soon. Lucius knew this and dragged Draco away after bidding the group goodbye trying to minimize the damage his stupid son had done.

Harry and his friends couldn’t believe what they had just witnessed. Malfoy had been forced to make a formal apology in front of everyone and it had been his own father that forced him to do it. When they asked why Lucius Malfoy was so angry Augusta explained them that if Draco hadn’t apologized to them she could demand retribution. Insulting an Heir or guests of a Noble House was equal to insulting the Head of House himself; it just wasn’t wise to do so. Families had claimed a blood feud for much less and since both the House of

Black and Longbottom had quite a bit of influence Malfoy was lucky that an apology was all they had wanted.

There would still be some consequences for Malfoy though; they had been humiliated in front of almost anyone who was anyone in the Wizarding World. It would take Lucius a lot of time or money to regain some dignity and favor from those people. Draco's stupidity had cost Lucius more than he knew. In the end Harry and his friend thought it was a fitting punishment for Draco and hopefully he would think twice before bothering them again during their time at Hogwarts.

Yes, it's already the end of the chapter and now we've reached the start of Harry's fourth year at Hogwarts. I'm looking forward to it and I hope you all feel the same. The tournament will happen and mostly remain the same (the tasks) but I hope I can put an original flavor to it. Let me know how you felt about this chapter and see you soon.

Chapter 34: First signs of a troubled future?

When they were finally done with laughing at Malfoy's misfortune Harry, Hermione, Tonks and Neville asked if they could visit the area with all the little stands and shops. Like most Muggle events of this magnitude there were a lot of activities and shops that one could visit. Sirius agreed since he knew Harry and Hermione could take of themselves and Tonks was with them in case of an emergency. Neville was allowed to go as well since Augusta didn't want to embarrass her grandson by not allowing him to be with his friends.

The four of them walked around and actually had a great time; they bought some snacks and did some of the activities. It reminded Hermione of the more traditional carnivals that Muggles used to have. There were no high tech rides like in the amusement park but they still had a great time playing and fooling around. They were looking at a souvenir shop when they bumped into some familiar redheads.

"Harry, it's absolutely wonderful to see you." Fred said loudly.

"And of course you too Hermione." George added smiling.

"Forge, Gred what are you two doing here." Harry said surprised but happy to see the twins. "You know Neville of course and this is Tonks."

"Good to see you Neville." The twins said before turning to Tonks. "My Lady, it's our pleasure to meet someone as beautiful as yourself." Fred said kissing her left hand while George kissed her right hand.

"Why thank you, kind gentlemen but I'm afraid you'll get nowhere with me." Tonks laughed at their flirting.

"Alas, it was not to be." The twins said dramatically. "Will we ever find our true love?"

The four laughed at the twins' drama piece and the twins bowed at the end. Harry asked them what they were doing here and they explained that as a Ministry worker their dad had managed to get

some tickets for the Championship. The six of them then continued talking about their summer and they all had a great laugh when the twins explained some of the pranks they had done to Ron and Ginny. Fred and George then led them to where they were staying. It took a while since the tent they were using was on the other side of the plain but meanwhile Harry and Neville told the twins what had happened earlier with Malfoy. Needless to say the twins were delighted to hear that Malfoy had been knocked down a peg or two. Just then Arthur came from behind the tent and noticed Harry and Hermione with two others he didn't immediately recognized.

"Harry, how nice to see you again." Arthur said smiling while shaking Harry's hand. "You too Hermione."

"It's good to see you to Mr. Weasley." They both said before they introduced Tonks and Neville. Arthur knew them both by name of course but had never met them before; introductions were made and soon they were all talking.

"Dad, where are Ron and Ginny?" Fred asked suddenly.

"Oh, they went for a walk about an hour ago." Arthur said. "They should be back any minute or so."

True enough about ten minutes later the two youngest Weasleys returned from they stroll around the plain. Ginny immediately recognized Harry from afar and raced back to the tent. She quickly greeted everyone before turning to Harry and started talking to him. Hermione frowned when she saw how close the little redhead leaned to Harry when talking to him and she had to control herself when she noticed Ginny touching Harry's arm.

"Relax 'Mione; you know she doesn't stand a chance with Harry." Tonks whispered in her ear. She had seen how Hermione had reacted to the youngest Weasley and she was sure there was a story behind it but now wasn't the time to ask about it. Hermione turned to Tonks and nodded trying to calm herself down. Luckily Ron provided with a distraction when he arrived at the tent.

"What are you guys doing here?" Ron asked them.

“What do you think Ronnikins?” The twins said rolling their eyes. “They’re here to see the Quidditch World Championship just like we are.”

“But you two don’t even like Quidditch all that much.” Ron said surprised.

“That may be true Ron but Neville here invited us to join him and his Grandmother.” Hermione said already annoyed at Ron.

“Oh, so where are your seats? Ours are not that good but it’s better than nothing right?” Ron asked them.

“Actually Gran said we’re in the Wizengamot private box so they should be pretty good.” Neville said softly.

“No way?!?” Ron said loudly. “How did you get such good seats?”

“Didn’t you hear what Neville just said?” Fred sighed. “Neville’s Gran is a member of the Wizengamot so it’s normal they get a private box.”

“But that’s so unfair; I want good seats as well.” Ron whined.

“I’m sorry Ron; Gran only had enough tickets for all of us.” Neville said sadly. He could understand how Ron felt to a certain degree; the boy was a major Quidditch fan and this was a once in a lifetime opportunity but there was nothing he could do about it.

“Must be nice to be rich and famous.” Ron muttered under his breath but everyone heard it.

“What is that supposed to mean?” Harry asked a bit mad.

“It’s just not fair that you and Neville get such good seats because you’re Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived and Neville’s Grandmother is in the Wizengamot.” Ron said loudly. If he had been paying attention to the others he would have seen how mad they were at that statement.

"You know Ron; you're an idiot." Harry said. "I would give anything in the world to have my parents alive and just be a normal wizard but unfortunately that's not possible. I hope you never have to feel the pain of not having your parents to support and guide you." Harry then turned around and left.

"Harry, wait for me." Hermione yelled after Harry. She turned back to Ron and she slapped him in the face. "If you ever say something like that again I'll make sure you'll regret it." Tonks glared at Ron contemplating if she should slap him too but she decided against it. She followed Hermione in search for Harry.

"What's her problem?" Ron said angry while rubbing his cheek. The girl was much stronger than he thought possible.

"Harry's right; you have no idea what it feels like growing up without parents." Neville said glaring at Ron. "Harry may be famous but it cost him his parents; you may think that being famous is great and all but he hates every minutes of it. It's a constant reminder of what he has lost. I agree with Hermione; say something like that again and you'll regret it." He said before saying goodbye to the twins and he too left.

"Well done Ron." The twins glared at their brother. "Don't you ever think before you speak? You know what? Don't bother answering that."

"I didn't mean it in that way." Ron tried to explain.

"I think it will be best if you stay away from Harry for a while." Fred said still angry at Ron. "And the first time you do speak to him it had better be an apology." George added.

Hermione raced after Harry knowing that her boyfriend was in pain; the death of his parents was something that pained him greatly and seeing as it was getting closer to the anniversary of their deaths in just two months it was a very sore subject for Harry. She didn't have to look for him as he was waiting for her a bit further and when she reached him he smiled slightly at her showing how grateful he was for her presence. She just kept quiet knowing he would talk when he was ready; he always did.

"I'm sorry for leaving like that." He finally said. "It's just that he made me so mad saying stuff like that."

"I know; you don't have to apologize." Hermione said softly.

"I just don't understand how he could wish to be in my place." Harry sighed. "Doesn't he know what it means?"

"Of course he doesn't; he just thinks that being famous and/or rich is all fun and games." Hermione snorted. "The fact that you don't like being famous is something he can't understand. It shows how immature and stupid he really is."

"Thank you 'Mione." Harry said giving her a quick peck on the lips. "What would I do without you?"

"You don't ever have to thank me Harry." Hermione said before looking around. "I love you." She said whispering the last part.

"I love you too." Harry whispered back and gave her a sincere smile that warmed her heart.

A minute later Tonks found them and they returned to where Sirius and Remus were waiting for them. Neville joined them again along the way and the four didn't speak of what had happened. They didn't have to as they all knew how Harry felt. Deciding that this wasn't to ruin the good time they were having they talked and joked until they reached the tents. Sirius was already chatting up some girl and according to Remus he had already been refused by three other witches. Harry shook his head at his godfather's actions but supposed that the man did earn some fun after all those years in Azkaban.

"Ah, it's good to be back." Sirius said laughing.

"Did you get her number?" Hermione asked him.

"Number? What number are you talking about?" Sirius asked confused. Hermione then explained that it was a Muggle thing to ask

for people's telephone number if you were interested in them. "Oh, no I didn't get her number but I'm not really interested in her anyway. It's just great fun to be able to flirt a little."

"You're incorrigible, Padfoot." Remus laughed.

"Says the man who charmed Virginia Pauwels out of her knickers." Sirius replied making Remus blush like crazy.

"Who's Virginia Pauwels?" Tonks asked interested. She loved gossip as long as it wasn't about her or her own love life.

"She was Mooney girlfriend back in sixth year." Sirius said while dodging Remus who tried to stop him from explaining. "She was also one of the prettiest Muggleborn Witches in Hogwarts during our time."

Luckily for Remus he managed to grab Sirius and stopped him from revealing too many details about his love life. He threatened Sirius with some blackmail material he still had from their days so he was sure Sirius would shut up about it. Recently innocent declared man nodded and told the rest that he couldn't tell them anything else much to their dismay. It was always fun to hear stories about Remus and Sirius. Just then an announcement was made that the game would start in an hour so they were asked to go to their seats.

When Harry and company reached the private box for the members of the Wizengamot and their guest they were surprised how big it was. It could easily hold several dozen people and all around the box were drinks and snacks displayed. When they noticed Harry enter a few people started to chatter and talk about him but none of them approached him for which he was very glad. He hated dealing with this fame of his. One person did come over however but it wasn't just for Harry; Amelia Bones went straight to Sirius and started a conversation with him before turning to Harry.

"Ah Mr. Potter, so good to finally meet you." Amelia said politely.

"The pleasure is all mine Madame Bones." Harry answered back. "I would like to thank you for your help with my godfather's case."

"Think nothing of it Mr. Potter. I only did what needed to be done and frankly I'm very sorry that I even had to intervene." She smiled sadly. "Such a mistake should never have been made in the first place."

"Please call me Harry, Ma'am. I'm not comfortable with all this Mr. Potter business." Harry said smiling.

"Very well Harry; I seems I have one more thing to thank you for. Actually I need to thank Miss Granger here as well." Amelia said looking at Hermione.

"Really? I can't remember doing something you might thank me for." Hermione said surprised.

"I'm talking about discovering the fraud that was Gilderoy Lockhart." Amelia snorted at the name. "Thanks to the both of you we were able to arrest him and thanks to his confessions we were able to restore the minds of a few people."

"Oh yeah, what happened to him anyway?" Harry said now wondering for the first time what had happened to the man.

"He was given a trial and was sentenced to fifteen years in Azkaban." Amelia said shocking the kids. Fifteen years in Azkaban was a heavy sentence after all.

"That long?" Hermione said feeling a bit guilty. Sure she wanted the man punished but this was a bit extreme.

"Absolutely Miss Granger, Obliviating people is a serious crime." Amelia explained. "If done incorrectly you could wipe out every memory a person has, instead of just the memory you wanted to erase. We found out that Lockhart made that mistake several times with his victims."

"He truly was a fraud and an incapable wizard wasn't he?" Neville said.

"I guess that does warrant such a heavy sentence." Harry agreed in the end.

"He certainly deserved whatever he got." Amelia said convincing.

They talked a bit about other things and Amelia also introduced her niece Susan. Harry and his two friends knew Susan from Hogwarts of course but none of them had truly spoken to each other before. It turned out that Susan was a very sociable person and they quickly became friends. Susan was a Hufflepuff and proud of it, she said; to her, friends and hard work were important just as Helga Hufflepuff had demanded from her students. To Helga it didn't matter if you were the best or worst student in class as long as you tried your best she accepted you.

Susan was a Half-Blood witch with her mother being a Pureblood and her father a Muggleborn. None of her family believed in the Pureblood propaganda that Voldemort used and some of her family had even been killed because they opposed him. Amelia Bones was her Aunt and Susan loved spending time with her whenever she could; to her she was the sort of woman she wanted to be when she grew up.

The four Hogwarts student plus Tonks had a great time talking and before they knew it the match was about to begin. Everyone in the box stopped talking and waited for the spectacle when the teams would enter the stadium. It was a tradition that the teams would perform some show for their fans and each time people were looking forward to see it. The first team to enter was the Bulgarian team and Harry couldn't believe how popular they were. Then he noticed that it wasn't the whole team that was popular instead it was this one young flyer called Krum. According to what Harry heard the other men say he was the best Seeker in the world. Then something amazing happened; as by magic itself almost every male in the stadium became distracted when a number of blond-haired cheerleaders started doing some dances. Harry was perplexed at what was happening and he asked Hermione and Tonks what was going on.

"Don't you feel that?" Hermione asked surprised but very happy.

“Feel what?” Harry asked curious. “Should I feel anything?”

“Harry, those women are Veela.” Tonks said amazed. “Veela have the ability to ensnare and charm almost every male of every species. It is said that only the most strong-willed men are capable of resisting their charm.”

“Is that why some of those men just jumped over the railing?” Harry pointed at the other side of the stadium. Luckily the ground was charmed to be very soft and bouncing so that when a player fell off his broom wouldn’t die from hitting the ground.

“Exactly; most men lose every bit of common sense when a Veela is around.” Hermione said proud of her boyfriend.

“Weird.” Harry just said shrugging. Frankly he couldn’t care less what some of those idiots did when faced with Veela. It was actually funny to see them make complete fools out of themselves just because of a pretty girl. He wasn’t about to deny that; the women were pretty if not downright gorgeous but that was all he thought about them. He chalked it up to his Occlumency and the fact that he loved Hermione so much.

Most of the women and girls present looked at Harry with a new form of respect. To resist the charm of a Veela was something that not many men could do and the fact that Harry was a young teenage boy, who is mostly guided by hormones at that age, was capable of such a feat was stunning. Hermione was feeling very special at the moment; her boyfriend was simply not interested in Veela but she was his girlfriend. The fact that she had outdone a Veela made her feel very good about herself and it showed in a beautiful smile.

“You really are something else Harry.” Tonks said softly looking at him.

The madness stopped when the Veela disappeared from the field and the males started to act normal again. Some of them would have a lot of explaining to do later on but most women knew they couldn’t help

themselves. Still it didn't mean they liked it when their husbands and boyfriends acted like a dog in heat in front of everyone.

With the Veela gone, the other team made their appearance as they flew around the stadium waving at the crowd who cheered them on. The Irish team was accompanied by leprechaun who threw gold all around them. Some of the more ignorant spectators started filling their pockets forgetting that the gold would disappear in a few hours. There were even some fights over the gold but the Aurors were quick to intervene.

Finally the match got started and Harry watched closely at the game but every once in a while his attention wandered away to other topics like the start of school and what he still had to accomplish. It wasn't that the game was boring but it took way too long for Harry's liking. He wasn't the only one as Hermione, Susan and Tonks had separated themselves so they could talk a bit. Harry was happy for Hermione as she seemed to have made another friend in Susan. He was aware that she didn't have many friends outside of their group so he was glad to see that Susan seemed to accept her as a friend.

The match finally ended after almost four hours of playing. The Bulgarian Seeker had managed to catch the Snitch but it was too late as the Irish team was still leading in points. It had been a close call as the match was fairly even throughout the game. Still the Irish had won and now the partying started but Harry and Co didn't plan on staying for that. They were exhausted and wanted nothing more than going home which they promptly did after saying their goodbyes to Neville and Susan.

The next morning Harry woke up extra early so he could prepare breakfast for everyone. It was the only time he was allowed to cook as Dobby refused to let him otherwise. When he happily preparing the food Hermione and Tonks had gotten up as well and were happily chatting away at the dinner table. As he did everyday Dobby 'popped' to Diagon Alley so he could buy the Daily Prophet for Miss Grangey and delivered it to her. Hermione thanked him for a job well done and turned to look at the newspaper. When she read the title of the front-page article she let out a huge shriek that alerted everyone even

Sirius who normally slept through anything. They all rushed to the table to see what was going on.

“Harry, you have to see this.” Hermione yelled out.

“What’s going on?” Remus asked tiredly but very alert. Hermione just turned the newspaper towards and showed them the front-page.

Death Eaters attack party at Quidditch championship.

Late last night amidst the partying that was going on after the Irish Quidditch team won the World championship a group of masked men attacked. The group of men, dressed up in the outfit of You-Know-Who’s faithful followers named Death Eaters were seen hexing and cursing people at random. Fortunately no one got seriously hurt or killed but fear was present throughout the campsite after they left. To make matters worse only seconds after the masked men disappeared, another tragedy occurred when You-Know-Who’s Dark Mark appeared in the sky.

It was after a quick investigation that a House-elf called Winky, formerly employed by Ministry worker Barty Crouch was found to have conjured the Dark Mark. Apparently she had managed to steal the wand of young Ronald Weasley as she was sitting in the same booth during the Quidditch match. According to her she was saving a seat for her master but Mr. Crouch never showed up as he had been invited to sit with the Minister and his guests. Mr. Crouch immediately gave Winky clothes saying she had embarrassed him enough and left the scene leaving a distressed and crying House-elf behind.

According to the Aurors that were guarding the campsite no Death Eaters have been found or arrested. The official word from the Ministry of Magic is that some people took a prank too far and assure the population that there is absolutely no danger. The Minister himself told us that You-Know-Who is never coming back and his Death Eaters are either in Azkaban or dead. He will however follow the matter closely and promised us that they culprits will be punished for their actions.

This reporter is astonished that some people would disguise themselves as You-Know-Who's followers just for scaring people. Have they forgotten how many friends and family we have lost to these madmen? We at the Daily Prophet hope that the culprits are found and punished for their ill-mannered prank.

More on You-Know-Who and his followers see page 2

More on known Death Eaters see page 3

To say the group was shocked would be an understatement; all of them had to sit down after reading the article. They all felt somewhat scared of what this might mean. Was Voldemort back already or was it, like the article said a prank? Should they take this seriously or could they really ignore this?

"Let's not jump to any conclusions just yet." Remus said finally. "Maybe it truly was some drunks who thought they were being funny?"

"I don't know Moony; something tells me that this is a sign of things to come." Sirius said sighing.

"I agree that we shouldn't jump to conclusions but I don't think we should simply ignore this." Hermione said as well. "I mean Death Eater's outfits aren't just for sale and if we read between the lines the Daily Prophet seems to think they were authentic."

"Then there's the fact that the Dark Mark appeared." Harry interjected. "Only Death Eaters would know how to do that spell."

"So what do we do now?" Tonks asked.

"For now we don't do anything but continue what we've been doing." Harry said calmly. "We train and prepare but I think it's safe to say that we must make haste. The more we get done the better and I have the feeling that things will change sooner than we'd hoped for."

“Okay, let’s stop worrying for now and just do what we do best.” Sirius said smiling. “When Voldemort is truly back we’ll know about it soon enough.”

“You’re right Sirius.” Remus said agreeing. “We should focus on what we know and what we can do.”

So they decided to step up the training and make haste in their preparations in case of emergency. The rest of the day they went over what still had to be done and they decided what they would work on first. Tonks later went to the Ministry to see if she could find out anything about last night but she came up empty. It seemed the Death Eaters had disappeared as soon as they lost the element of surprise and before the Aurors could arrive at the scene. Sirius told them that this was the tactic the Death Eaters used the most; it was efficient and it scared people enough to fear future attacks. The Aurors couldn’t keep up with the randomness of the attacks and mostly wasted their time searching for them and getting from one attack to another.

The last day of the summer holiday Harry and his friend spend in tranquility and playing pranks on each other. The summer had started with good news of Sirius’ innocence and his freedom and had continued when Tonks joined their group. That’s why Harry wanted the end the summer on a festive note instead of worrying about the future that would come. The rest had of course agreed and they had the most fun in weeks. A truly fitting end for a great summer in Harry’s opinion.

Well, that’s it for this chapter. I hope you enjoyed it and let me know what you thought about it. See you in two weeks for the next chapter.

Chapter 35: Start of Fourth Year

Riding the Hogwarts Express at the start of year always felt special to Harry. The first time he had made the trip he met his girlfriend and made a wonderful friend at the same time. The train ride was something that Harry enjoyed every time though it took way too much time. After the summer everyone had lots of stories to tell and all of them were eager to see their friends again. This year however Harry had a feeling that things wouldn't go so well at Hogwarts. It wasn't a premonition or something like that; it was just a gut feeling. He couldn't explain it why but he sensed that things were going to change before the end of the school year. He had talked about it with Hermione and she had told him not to worry about it too much and take things as they came. Still she agreed to up the training and studying this year since she too agreed that with each year the chances of Voldemort coming back grew.

Harry looked at the platform where the parents said their (sometimes teary) goodbyes to their children who they would have to miss until Christmas Holidays. He smiled at the nervous face of the first year students remembering how nervous he had felt at the time. He searched the crowd looking for someone familiar when he spotted Neville and his grandma arriving as well. He waved at them and they slowly made their way through the dozens of people.

"Hey Harry, ready for another year?" Neville asked him.

"Sure thing Neville, you?" Harry said smiling.

"Yeah, I feel ready for everything they throw at me." Neville said with confidence.

"Well Neville, seeing you're in good hands now I'll say my goodbye here." Augusta said sternly. "Have a good year and make me proud."

Neville and Harry said goodbye and then turned to where Sirius and the rest were standing. They all greeted Neville with enthusiasm and soon they were all discussing what had happened at the Quidditch Championship. Soon it was time to board the Hogwarts Express and

the three kids said their goodbye as well. Tonks insisted on a hug from the three of them and they were all too happy to give her one. She then told Harry and Hermione to take care of each other and whispered that she would be seeing them soon.

Once inside the train the trio found their compartment and settled down. Harry asked Neville if he felt like playing a game of Exploding Snap who accepted while Hermione chose to read a bit. It didn't take long for the train to leave the station and soon they were in the middle of nowhere well on their way to Hogwarts.

Later on the twins joined them and after apologizing to Harry and Neville for their brother's stupid remark a few days earlier they all had a lot of fun playing Exploding Snap or telling stories about their summer. The train went very quick and not once did Malfoy show himself; they all knew Malfoy had made a huge mistake by insulting Neville and Harry in front of their respective Head of House and godfather and he probably received some kind of punishment by his father. The fact that Malfoy didn't show his face didn't bother them in the least; in fact they hoped he would leave them alone for the rest of their time at Hogwarts but that seemed a bit too optimistic.

When the Hogwarts Express finally arrived at Hogsmeade Station, Harry and the group were hungry and tired. Frankly Harry wondered why they had to take the train each year; sure it was a nice tradition that the First years enjoyed very much but after that it got old very quick. The train ride took hours and there was only so much you could do on board of a train. Wouldn't it be easier just to use the Floo or Apparate to Hogsmeade and just take the carriage to Hogwarts Castle from there on? Harry guessed it was a prime example of how the Wizarding World refused to change anything. It didn't matter to them that a more effective solution was available; they were just too lazy to change anything. Harry mounted the carriage with Hermione and Neville who were already waiting for him.

When they entered the Great Hall both Harry and Hermione felt right at home again and they couldn't wait for the opening feast to begin. But of course the sorting of the first year student had to take place and then Prof. Dumbledore would say a few words. Hermione always

enjoyed the sorting but Harry wasn't that interested; he smiled at some of the faces of the youngsters but that was it. Dumbledore's speech this year wasn't all that impressive either so when he opened the feast Harry dug right in.

"Are you that hungry Harry?" Hermione chuckled.

"Hey, I'm a growing boy." Harry said before attacking a chicken leg.

"I understand that but just don't turn into Ron." Hermione said pointing at the boy. Harry turned to look and saw Ron fill his plate with everything that he could find before pigging down. Harry frowned at the boy's manners and turned back to his girlfriend.

"At least I have manners and I'm capable of showing restraint." Harry joked.

An hour later Harry was sure he was going to explode if he ate one more thing. It had been delicious as always and his favorite desert had been served as well. Now however he was getting tired after such a huge dinner and he couldn't wait to get to his bed. Unfortunately for Harry he would have to wait a bit longer as Dumbledore stood up and prepared for an announcement.

"May I have your attention please?" Dumbledore said and the whole Hall fell quiet. "Thank you; I have several announcements to make so please be patient. First of all, I would like to announce that there will be no Quidditch this year." At hearing this the Hall exploded in protest and it took a bit of time before Dumbledore took control again. "I know a lot of you are disappointed but there's a reason for not playing Quidditch. Over the last year Hogwarts has been talking with two other Magic schools to restart the famous 'Tri-Wizard Tournament'. This tournament will be held at Hogwarts later this year and it will be a competition between Hogwarts, the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic and the Durmstrang Institute." Dumbledore paused a bit letting the students absorb the information he had just given them.

"What the Tournament will be shall be announced later on. Though I can give you the following information." Dumbledore said. "Each school will have one champion representing them; how the champion

will be chosen is a surprise for later. There is one restriction however and that is that any candidate who wishes to compete for the spot of champion must be of age. This, as you all know means you have to be 17 years old before the Tournament starts. This is done for safety reasons as we don't want anyone to get hurt." Again a lot of protest came from the students who wished to prove themselves worthy. "Any more information will be divulged later on. I wish you all a good night and a good year."

The next morning Harry woke up around six am and decided that he might as well get up to start the day. They had decided that they would wait a week before they went back down to the Chamber so they wouldn't arouse any suspicion. After a refreshing shower Harry took his DADA book and went down to the common room. As it was still early and most of the kids were still in vacation mode he was alone in the room. He had no doubt however that his best friend would join him momentarily as she too was used to getting up at a certain hour. About twenty minutes later he heard someone descending the girls' stairway and he looked up.

"Good morning Harry, I thought I might find you here." Hermione smiled at him.

"Morning 'Mione, I was awake so I decided to get up and read a bit." Harry greeted her.

"So what do you think about this tournament?" Hermione asked him while plopping down on the couch.

"I really don't know." Harry sighed. "I think it might be interesting to meet people from other schools but somehow I have a bad feeling about this tournament."

"I agree; I especially would like to get to know some girls from Beauxbatons." Hermione said. "Did you know that it's an all-girl school? I can't imagine what it would be like."

"I can only think how they will react to all the boys here." Harry chuckled.

“And the Hogwarts boys to them.” Hermione quickly added smiling.
“They’re too late though.”

“Huh?” Harry said not understanding what she meant.

“The best of them is already taken.” She answered before giving him a quick kiss taking advantage of the fact that they were alone.

“I feel exactly the same way.” Harry smiled at her while taking her hand and giving it a little squeeze. They had agreed not advertise their relationship just yet so they had to be careful not to get noticed.

The both of them talked a bit more before leaving the Common Room to have breakfast in the Great Hall. Like each year McGonagall would pass out the class schedules that morning and both of them were curious about it. They had taken the exact same classes as last year and they had no doubt that things would be okay this year as well. They didn’t really experience any problem after they had done the power ritual the summer before third year so they didn’t think it would bother them this year as well.

When they entered the Great Hall they saw that some other students had arrived as well mainly a few Ravenclaws and one Hufflepuff. They sat down at the table and not a moment later breakfast appeared before them. When they finished eating they saw their Head of House approaching with their class schedules in hand.

“Good morning Professor.” They both greeted her.

“Good morning Mr. Potter, Miss Granger.” Minerva said. “I trust you both had a good summer?”

“It was okay Professor; we’re glad to be back though.” Hermione answered for both of them.

“Here are your class schedules for this term, I hope you’ll find them satisfactory.” Minerva smiled at her prized Gryffindors.

“Who is teaching DADA this year, Professor?” Harry asked out of the blue.

“The Headmaster has asked one of his most trusted friends to take on that task.” McGonagall said. “I’m sure you’ll be pleasantly surprised as Alastor Moody is quite experienced as a retired Auror.”

“Really? Alastor Moody is our teacher?” Hermione said excited.

“Yes Miss Granger; I’m quite sure.” Minerva smirked at seeing both Harry and Hermione so excited at the thought of being taught by Mad Eye Moody. If only they knew she thought.

Slowly but surely the Great Hall filled with hungry students and soon sounds of the students talking was ear deafening. Harry and Hermione said hello to the twins who they hadn’t spoken yet before getting their books for the classes. Monday was pretty relax as they only had Herbology and Ancient Runes. Classes went pretty good and Harry and Hermione were glad to see what they would be learning this year as first class usually was an overview of what they would see during the year. Ancient Runes promised to be very interesting and Hermione couldn’t wait to get started.

The next day was pretty much the same except the fact that they had to deal with Snape’s class where the Gryffindors were once again placed with the Slytherins. Snape did his annual testing of Harry by asking him questions that a fourth year student shouldn’t know but just like the years before Harry was prepared and managed to answer three of the four questions correctly. Snape of course didn’t hesitate to belittle Harry for not knowing the answer to the last question which made almost all the Slytherins laughing, Malfoy in particular. Harry couldn’t care less so he wasn’t bothered by it at all. When Snape had finally told him what potion they were going to brew that day Harry smiled at Hermione knowing that they would have no trouble brewing the Pepper-up Potion. They had brewed that several times during the summer.

History of magic was just about the same as always with Binns droning away about Goblin rebellions. Harry didn’t really pay attention

to what the ghost said as he had bought a quill that was charmed to write down every word on its own. Hermione was against it at first but she soon asked him for the second one he had bought for her. That way she could listen to what the teacher said without having to hurry and note everything down. When class was over most of the students had to be shaken awake but Binns didn't seem to notice or simply didn't care.

Nothing really special or exciting happened in the classes so far but when the first lesson of DADA arrived students were getting very anxious. They had all seen the strange and retired Auror during meal times and to say that the man was intimidating was no exaggeration. The man was scary to say the least; especially to the first years. McGonagall had to intervene with his lesson plan when some of the first years came crying to her saying that Prof. Moody was too scary. Granted, telling first years that they would never reach his old age if they didn't practice constant vigilance was a bit much perhaps.

When the Gryffindor and Slytherin students entered the classroom Moody was already waiting for them. He wasted no time and barked an order to sit down and be quiet. Strangely even Malfoy, who thought himself Prince of Hogwarts didn't dare to say a word or complain. Harry and Hermione went straight to a desk in front of the classroom and sat down. Moody seemed to be impressed with their courage and nodded to them. Most of the students he had had so far were all spineless cowards who refused to come and sit in front of him.

"Alright listen up." Moody barked. "I'm not a kind teacher so there will be no whining and complaining. I'm an Auror and not a teacher. Nonetheless, I have reviewed your previous teachers and I have to say with the exception of Lupin they all sucked. What our illustrious Headmaster was thinking when he hired Lockhart I'll never know."

This made several students chuckle as they remembered just what an idiot Lockhart had been. Moody however wasn't amused and whipped out his wand and a loud bang, like a cannon being fired silenced most of them. A glare later and nobody moved as much as an inch.

"You idiots think this is funny?" Moody growled. "You won't laugh when you have a dark lord or his minions after you while casting cutting spells aimed at your neck. Let me tell, you all have a lot of catching up to do and believe me I will make sure you know what you need to know at the end of this school year. Now, today we'll be discussing the Unforgivables." Moody looked at the class before he cast a spell at Malfoy making him stand up. "Draco Malfoy, spawn of Lucius tell me do you know one of the Unforgivables?"

"T-there's the Imperious Curse, Sir. My father told me about it." Malfoy quickly said hoping Moody wouldn't see how scared or nervous he was.

"Ah yes, the Imperious Curse." Moody chuckled. "Indeed, your father would know this one wouldn't he? He and many others claimed to be under this curse's influence when they were questioned after the defeat of their master." Moody then showed what the curse was capable of doing by making an enlarged spider dance on the desk where Ron was sitting; Ron almost fainted on the spot. "You there, do you know another one?" Moody pointed to Neville.

"The Cruciatus Curse, Sir." Neville said breathing deeply with a pale face. Harry and Hermione knew why this had such an effect on Neville and they thought that Moody was a bit insensitive by asking Neville about that particular curse.

"Yes, Yes the Cruciatus." Moody said smiling. "A terrible curse; the receiver of the this curse feels pain beyond pain. One of the Death Eaters favorite curses; to cast it one must feel hatred and anger towards the receiver." He then demonstrated by casting the curse at the spider; the poor creature started shaking and seemed to be in massive pain. After a few seconds Moody seemed to remember that he was in a classroom and stopped the curse. Neville and several other students were pale and mostly shocked that a teacher would show them such a thing.

"And the last Unforgivable?" Moody said looking straight at Harry.

"The Killing Curse." Harry answered calmly. He wasn't about to be intimidated by this man; he stared at Moody and refused to back down.

"The Killing Curse." Moody repeated. "Instant death as we know it. No wound, no pain just death. Only one person has survived after being struck down by it." Moody said still looking at Harry and now most of the class looked at him as well. "Avada Kadavra." The spider got hit with the green spell and stopped moving. "The Killing Curse requires not only a certain level of magical power but also intent; you must want to kill the target. If one of you would cast it at me, I doubt I would get a nosebleed of it."

Just then the bell rang and the students raced out of the classroom happy that this class was over. Most of them were shocked at what they had seen today and were glad that this was the last class of the day. Harry and Hermione weren't affected that much and comforted Neville who had been in a right state. He apologized for being weak but they just smiled at him saying that he had nothing to be ashamed of.

"I just wish I could be strong like you two." Neville sighed. "Don't get me wrong; I learned a lot thanks to you guys but I want to be stronger." Harry looked at Hermione and smiled before he stormed up to the Gryffindor common room saying he would be right back. Harry raced up to his dorm and opened his trunk snatching a few documents before hurrying back. Hermione and Neville were still waiting where he had left them but Neville seemed to have calmed down.

"Here Neville, this might help you." Harry said handing the documents to Neville who looked at them.

"Occlumency?" Neville read. "What's that?"

It took Harry and Hermione about a hour to explain what Occlumency was and how it would help him with his studies and to control his emotions. They did ask him to keep this a secret as students weren't supposed to know this skill. They assured him that it wasn't illegal to learn it but if people found out they would have to answer to many

questions and that was something they wanted to avoid. They also warned him that it would take him several months before he would master the exercises so he wouldn't feel bad when it didn't seem to work straight away. Neville promised to work hard at it and to keep it a secret from everyone.

It was now the second week of September and tonight Harry, Hermione and the twins would meet at the Chamber for the first time since before the summer. Harry knew it was strange but he found himself longing to go there again. The Chamber had sort of become a home inside Hogwarts and he liked it. Now that they had finished with decorating the Chamber except some minor things he thought of it as a place where he could go and be amongst family.

Dobby popped the four of them straight to the conference room and Harry asked him if he could go and get the rest of the group. Dobby nodded and 'popped' away returning only a few seconds later with Sirius, Remus and Tonks.

"Forge, look; it's the one who got away." Gred said to his twin brother. The two of them went straight to Tonks and started flirting with her but as before Tonks just smiled and said that their flirting wouldn't change the fact she was out of their league.

"Alright you two, behave." Harry laughed before telling them to sit down at the table. "Tonks, Sirius welcome to the Chamber of Secrets."

"Wotcher." Tonks said softly clearly impressed.

"The tour will have to wait until after the meeting." Harry smiled at her. "First item on the agenda is the finding a new name for this place. Any ideas?"

"What's wrong with Chamber of Secrets?" Sirius asked.

"There's nothing wrong with the name per se." Hermione said. "It's just that it's too obvious. People know that the Chamber is located in

Hogwarts and the teachers know where they can find the access. Not to mention Voldemort knows this as well."

"What about 'The Cave'?" Fred proposed.

"Not bad but it makes me think about Batman." Harry said.

"Whose Batman?" the twins asked curious.

"It's a Muggle thing don't worry about it." Hermione said quickly fearing that she would have to explain just who Batman really is.

"I kind of like 'The Lair'." Remus said.

The others seemed to like it as well so 'The Lair' got accepted; when that was done the twins told and showed them some of the ideas they had come up with over the summer. They had come up with a Wizarding version of a grenade but instead of an explosion you got sprayed with a potion. The potion could be anything from being a simple sleeping draft to a violent boil sprouting one. They all loved the idea and the twins said that they would start making them as soon as possible.

"Well done guys; well Hermione and I worked on something as well." Harry said before he grabbed something invisible. Out of nowhere a mannequin appeared as it had been hidden under his invisibility cloak. Everyone started at the outfit the mannequin was wearing. "This will be our battle-robos; there is one for each of you and for our future members as well of course." He then started to explain the feature and the protections the robes offered.

"Blimey Harry, that's more than Aurors get." Tonks said impressed.

"That's the point, Tonks." Harry nodded. "I want each of you well protected and safe. It will also insure that our identity isn't found out immediately."

"Good job Harry, Hermione." Sirius said to both of them. "Well, I guess Remus and I will have to show what we've done as well. If you would take a look at your right you will see a map of Hogwarts just

like the Marauder's map. Over the past few weeks Remus and I created one for Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley as well. We've inserted the names of the Death Eaters still alive; we thought about adding our names as well in case of an emergency."

The rest of the night was spend by showing Tonks and Sirius around 'The Lair' and some planning for the coming months. When morning came all of them had something to do and they each knew their assignments. Remus and Sirius would start securing a few more safe houses by buying a few small apartments and warehouses; Tonks would start investigating in the Ministry of Magic to see who was on which side; the twins would start mass producing their Magical Grenades while Harry and Hermione would start on their second animagus form and compile a new list of spells and magic they had to learn. All in all it would be a busy year and they didn't even know what was coming.

That's it for this chapter. Hope it was any good so let me know. See you in two weeks for the next chapter. Bye for now.

CHP036